

by Sandfire Kat

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Summary: When Hiccup thought it was all over, Night Furies start to attack Berk in revenge for what he and Toothless had both done to them. It is up to Hiccup and Toothless once more to save Berk before it is too late. Before all of Berk is destroyed. A strange ally is found, and Hiccup realizes that with her help, they could solve everything. But the thought might just come too late.

1. Chapter 1

A/N: I AM BACK! I said I would be back, and I'm back! Although I took a short littleâ€¦break-thingy in the middle there, right? So I apologize for that. I've been mulling over a few ideas for this story in my head, and I think that I finally landed on something, and I hope that you all are still watching me to see this new installment! So let me fill you in on some stuff:

I am writing two other stories, and I might add another onto this one. My brain is just spurting out ideas like a hurricane, and so I ask you to be patient with me this time. You wont get the daily updates like last chapter, I'm afraid! But the chapters are long, and hopefully this story will be as good as the other one!

I was so close to five hundred reviews on the other one, and hopefully I will reach that number this time. So I should really start typing right now~! (About a few months' distance from last story. That's where this one takes place) P.S: I'm keeping Shadowclaw's name same for lack of confusion~

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The fire came with a scream, the ball of heat slamming into the ground and making the dry grass around it immediately catch on fire. It was something Berk had never seen before, at least, nothing as bad as this. Fireballs shot down to the earth like rain, while you ran

away from one blast, you ran right into another. The Vikings and their dragons were in a frenzy, dashing back and forth, weaving in between the fire to be able to pour water on the houses that were currently aflame.

No dragons swooped down to try and attack the tribe of Berk, and frankly, none could be seen in the sky either. It was as if the rain of fireballs were coming from nowhere but the stars, something that was both impossible and highly unrealistic. It was all the people of Berk could do to try and smother the flames before they got too bad, shooting cannons randomly up into the sky in hopes of striking something important.

The embers flying off from the flames leapt around in the once-cold winter wind, flying in all directions and landing on passing Vikings. The teenagers were busy with the water, so transfixed that they didn't even notice the sharp stings of the small orange things landing on them. It was probably too hot for anybody to notice, after all. What with the two-foot-tall walls of flame surrounding them as they ran past, the embers probably didn't make much of a difference to anybody.

But the loud squalling of a cat proved that theory wrong, of course. Ludi's fur was fluffed out in all directions, claws digging into the shoulder of her owner, eyes wide and dilated, ears flat and mouth opened as large as it could go as she screamed loudly. Hiccup grimaced, faltering in his unsteady run as he reached up and tried to pry her off of his shoulder, her small-but-pointy-claws sticking deep into his skin with an uncomfortable stinging pain.

Hiccup's eyes were watering as he ran, coughing loudly in his elbow as he tried to skirt around the flames that roared loudly in front of him. He tried to feel his way to the blacksmith's shop, the fear that the building had been burned down making the teen determined to go on. The smoke was so thick around him that Hiccup could barely open his eyes without them stinging in pain. Thrusting one hand out to feel what was in front of him, Hiccup raised the other and twisted it upward. His hand floundered on Ludi's fluffy fur for a moment or two as he felt around, but then he finally found her mouth. Reaching forward, he clamped his hand down over her mouth, cutting off the cat's yells abruptly.

Viking's yells and orders became something of a roar of the catastrophe, Hiccup could barely hear himself think, let alone talk. Stumbling forward, Hiccup's hand suddenly met with a large slice of white-hot pain as he pressed it against a burning building. For a moment, he froze, stiffening as his eyes snapped open despite the burning from the smoke. Then, he jumped into motion, leaping backwards, his hand letting go of Ludi's mouth to grab his wrist so tight that his knuckles turned white.

The movement was so sharp, that Ludi let out a small squeak, digging her claws even deeper into Hiccup's skin as she fought for her perch. Closing his eyes tightly, Hiccup sucked in a breath to yell, but immediately stopped, leaning over and coughing into his elbow from the smoke. His hand burned and sizzled, blisters and sores already appearing on the palm by the time he had finished his coughing fit.

Stamping his foot on the ground rapidly, Hiccup closed his eyes in a

silent grimace. Ducking his head down, he felt his chin touch his chest as he did so. Waiting a few moments, the image of the blacksmith's wriggled its way into his mind once more. Rubbing his eyes as hard as he could, Hiccup blinked rapidly, trying to get used to the smoke as he made sense of a little of what surrounded him. The walls of smoke were dense, but Hiccup could tell that he was somewhere near the edge of the island. Few more steps, and he would have had a lot more trouble than a burned hand. Sort of.

What kind of thing would be this strong? The whole of Berk was literally on fire! This made all of the other dragon raids they got in the past look like a kiddie game! Hiccup had never seen anything like this, and he hadn't seen the old raids either. Not ever since the other dragons became friends with the people of Berk. So what other dragons were attacking them now?

Ludi's small squeak made Hiccup come back to the present. Jerking, he turned, only being able to make sense of Ludi's shape from her silver-white coat. Or, what used to be silver-white. By now the fluffy mess was tangled, streaked with soot and ash. The cat seemed frightened out of her fur, and Hiccup realized with a pang that being in the smoke was just as bad for her as it was for him.

Craning his arms backwards, he grabbed Ludi and yanked her off of his shoulder painfully, wincing as he did so. Taking Ludi carefully, Hiccup held her so that her face was buried inside his chest, hoping that it would hold her until they got to the blacksmith's, or hopefully at least somewhere they could hide in.

Starting, Hiccup wiped his eyes once more, trying to blink back the wetness in his eyes from the sharp sting of the smoke. Where was he again? The smoke was starting to fog his mind, making him confused as he tried and remember where he was exactly. If he went the wrong way, he could find the ground give away underneath him. Where was everybody else? He could hear them, but he didn't know where they were! Starting to panic somewhat, Hiccup felt the same pressing sensation he felt when he was caught in a tight space.

He reached out to try and feel where he was, when a loud snorting noise behind him made him whirl around, making sense of a large dark blot racing towards him. Out of a somewhat new kind of habit, he flinched away from the oncoming thing, tightening his hold on Ludi as he ducked his head. But the form skidded to a stop in front of him, and when he opened his eyes a little reluctantly, it took him a moment for a wave of relief to wash over him.

Toothless's green eyes were round and concerned as he looked at his human. On Toothless's head, perched like a gallant sentry, was Shadowclaw, the smaller dragon letting out a joyous chirp as he looked down at Hiccup and Ludi. The teen let out a breath that he hadn't realized he was holding as he smiled gratefully up at Toothless with the familiar crooked smile. "Hey, Bud." He rasped, the smoke making his voice rough and scratchy.

Ludi shuffled to the side, poking her head around Hiccup's arm, blinking largely as she saw the two dragons in front of her. They must have been saviors to the small cat, and she let out a happy mew, wriggling and thrashing until Hiccup let her go. The silver kitten gathered herself for a moment before she jumped over gracefully, landing on Toothless's back with an inaudible thump.

Toothless let out yet another snort, and Hiccup coughed loudly in his elbow before he nodded once. Stumbling forward, the teen grabbed onto the Night Fury's saddle, pulling himself up with more difficulty than he thought it would take. Wheezing by the time he finally sat down on his perch, the Viking blinked, titling his head back and looking up at the sky thoughtfully for a moment or two. Blinking rapidly, the teen shouldered to the side, narrowing his eyes as he caught sight of the black tailfin.

He didn't know why he kept the fin there, he didn't know why Toothless had not broken it like he had the last one. The thought of the dragon not breaking the fin made Hiccup slightly unnerved, but the teen shook his head roughly in hopes of clearing it, whirling back around and tightening his hold on Toothless. He hesitated for a moment before he spoke, raising his voice despite the pain that was throbbing in his throat. "Come on, bud!" He yelled. "Let's see what's really going on!"

Toothless did not move, looking back at Hiccup skeptically for a moment or two. It was obvious that the dragon was seriously doubting his rider's motives. But when Hiccup's face did not even flicker, Toothless gave in. Barking over to Shadowclaw, Toothless crouched low to the ground, Shadowclaw doing the same as he leapt off of Toothless's head and onto the burning ground. Hiccup quickly grabbed Ludi, and then they were in the air again.

Almost like a reflex, Hiccup pushed his foot into third position, but faltered as he realized that the brace was not there anymore. Regaining his balance, Hiccup shook himself, sucking in a deep breath of clean air as they broke away from the smoldering fire. Gaining air, Toothless slowed in his beatings, changing to a standstill as Hiccup leaned over to the side, looking down at Berk with something of a sad expression.

The whole thing was aflame. There was no doubt about it. Pretty soon, it would spread back into the woods and then catch from there. Hiccup could make out Astrid and Stormfly flying down below, and he willed Thor to help them stop the fire before it was too late. After all, they didn't really have a growing season in Berk, if everything got destroyed, then what would become of all of them? The thought sent Hiccup's stomach into nervous flips.

Shaking himself for what seemed like the umpteenth time, Hiccup straightened, looking around with narrowed eyes. The sky seemed empty to say the least, the only thing that showed were the stars and the clouds that were rolling in slowly. Shadowclaw's ears twitched nervously where he hovered, and Hiccup noticed Toothless do the same. He knew something was wrong, for both of the dragons to be upset at the same time, but what could it be? There was nothing up here! Hiccup made a move to change his gaze to the left again, when suddenly, a large fireball shot past him, nearly slamming right into his head. Hiccup jerked backwards, losing his balance as he teetered on the edge of Toothless's saddle. The dragon tensed at the attack, jerking to the side so that his human could right himself.

Heart drumming as fast as a hummingbird, Hiccup's breaths came in pants as he tried to calm himself down. Whirling around, Hiccup held tight to Toothless as he looked in the direction the flame had come from. Nothing was there. It was as if the attacker had melted into

the clouds before Hiccup could turn back around. Ludi was starting to squirm, uneasy squeaks coming from her as she did so. Feeling a flash of sympathy for the cat, Hiccup tightened his hold, reassuring her as he snuggled her closer.

Hiccup tensed as he heard a faint noise, something that was very familiar and very bone-chilling. Gasping loudly, Hiccup yelled just as the fireball came into view. "DUCK!" He ordered, not able to control his dragon's movements himself anymore. Toothless responded at once, diving down to escape the flame as it shot past.

Shadowclaw -a little unsteady himself at flying- was slightly slower than Toothless, but managed to get away all the same, eyes wide as he looked over at Hiccup in an almost plea for help. Hiccup didn't see what he could do, without Toothless's tailfin, he was clumsy at this. How was he supposed to have Toothless go where he wanted if he didn't have a tailfin to control? Hiccup had no time to answer before another fireball came at him.

Quick as lightening, more and more fireballs shot out, each one coming from an invisible source. Heart hammering, Hiccup heard more and more of the soundsâ€the same sound that Toothless made. Before he could think of what he was about to say, it came out in more of a squeak than anything. "Night Furies?" He screamed, horror and uneasiness filling his voice as his memories flashed back to that day in the cave.

Then, he saw it. A flash of dark heading his way. The Night Fury exploded into view, and Hiccup went completely still as he recognized the dragon. It was the same one that had been so quick to first to attack him. Toothless recognized the dragon too, letting out a loud squall as he tried to twist around to face the dragon so that Hiccup wasn't the one to do so.

But it wasn't the dragon that was in front of him that made Hiccup surprised. It was the dragon behind that one. Hiccup's head felt like it was full of water, spinning and roaring where he sat and making him dizzy. His grip on Ludi slackened, and he felt his fingers start to go numb as he went into shock. His eyes were round like dinner plates, and his heart beat a million times per second. Toothless obviously didn't see what made Hiccup so frightened, only concentrating on the dragon at hand.

But to no avail.

Before Toothless could even try and stop him, the Night Fury by the name of Fleetfoot let out a loud roar, leaning over and smacking a numb Hiccup off of the saddle. The boy had been in such a rush, that he hadn't strapped himself to the saddle, and Toothless watched with wide eyes as his human plummeted down to the ground faster than a rock, Ludi screaming after him.

Hiccup didn't even seem to notice it though. The human's eyes were wide as they stared up at Toothless, but he seemed distant. Toothless realized with fright that Hiccup had gone unaware to his surroundings, something was wrong, he was in shock. He didn't even move as he fell, and Toothless forgot all about the other dragons as he dove down in an attempt to reach him human before the ground did.

Shadowclaw let out a screech, doing the same as he went down for Ludi. Toothless's heart hammered, and he prayed that he would reach in time. The ground got closer and closer, and Hiccup expression did not change one bit.

The boy's wide eyes were staring at something that Toothless could not see.

[illegible]

A/N: PFT. What did he see? HMMMMMMMM?

We gonna find out *waggles eyebrows*

2. Chapter 2

A/N: I was listening to the song Free Falling a few minutes ago…that made me laugh…o-o

So sorry for the lack of updates. Life literallyâ€slammed into me full-force. I have honors classes to look out for and then we're doing this really big thing in history. Combine that with PSR with my Saint Report, I just spaced out from here a little bit. Parents left for Mexico, leaving me with my baby sister and my puppy. Soâ€I apologize for that. (P.S: this is the sequel to Deception)

â€œWhile I was typing, my puppy was eating a Hershey's barâ€
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"Fishlegs!" Astrid shouted over the roar of the fire. "You need to get Meatlug over to the left and get that house! Its been burning longer than this one!" The Viking started at her order, snapping upright as he whipped around to look at the burning house with wide eyes. Turning his dragon around, Fishlegs followed Astrid's directions, zooming away into the thick cloud of black smoke that had made itself around the house in flames.

The blonde leaned over and hacked painfully into her elbow, grimacing as she did so. Ruffnut and Tuffnut had broken away a while ago to make sure that the Elder's house went untouched, it would be the end of all of it if the Elder's house were to go up in flames. Snotlout had broken off a while ago for another house. That left Astrid alone with Stormfly now. The blonde was aware that there had to be more Vikings around dousing the flames, but she couldn't see them through the thick smoke that constricted her lungs. She felt more alone than ever amid the swirling cloud from the fire.

"Okay, Stormfly!" Astrid rasped, shaking herself back into motion as she patted her dragon comfortingly on the neck. "A little bit longer!" The dragon snorted out a reply, wings beating against the flames as she darted forward, leaning over and dousing some of the flames with the water that was kept in her mouth. Astrid gripped the bucket she held a little tighter, throwing some of the water out with a loud sizzling noise.

Some spark flew up, colliding painfully against her skin as she hissed. Brushing off the small orange balls, Astrid reached up, rubbing her eyes roughly as she tried to clear them from the smoke. She was sure that they were bloodshot by now, they were throbbing in pain as she winced to herself. She'd give anything to be a dragon right about now, she supposed. They didn't have to think twice before going back out into a fire. They were already fire-proof.

Breath coming in rapid gasps, Astrid turned Stormfly around as she realized something. The bombardment of fireballs had stopped. Yes, they had stopped! The girl halted, growing silent as she waited, listening for the telltale sound of a fireball hitting its target, but nothing happened. A smile slowly spread over her ash-covered face and the girl straightened with something close to excitement. The fireballs had stopped!

Even now the smoke was starting to clear up, the noise from below in Berk quieting a fraction. Astrid leaned over to cough one last time into her elbow when she saw something out of the corner of her eye. A flash of movement. Straightening, Astrid blinked rapidly as she narrowed her eyes, confusion written all over her face as she looked up into the sky.

It was a rather small thing, something that could only be seen through the outline of the stars. Hearing a sharp noise, she looked higher up and saw with confusion that it was Toothless and Shadowclaw, the two Night Furies trying to catch up to the falling thing. Astrid's eyes widened as she realized that Hiccup was not on the back of Toothless like he should be. And neither was Ludi. Heart dropping faster than she anticipated, Astrid let out a loud yell, yanking Stormfly over, the dragon's wings immediately pumping up and down in a blue blur as she sensed Astrid's panic.

"Hiccup!" Astrid yelled at the top of her lungs, wincing slightly at the pain that lanced up her throat. The closer she got, the more defined it became. Hiccup was falling, and yet he wasn't even doing anything about it. He was as limp as one of those rag dolls that the village children drag around on the ground, only making Astrid's concern increase as she pushed Stormfly even faster. "Hiccup, hold on!" She shouted, as if that would stop him in midair.

Both her and Toothless were nearing Hiccup, the boy getting dangerously closer to the ground with each precious second. Leaning forward, Astrid maneuvered Stormfly carefully so that they were under Hiccup, the blonde reaching out as she tried to brace herself to catch him. Making sure that she would be balanced on Stormfly carefully, Astrid gritted her teeth as Hiccup came inches away from her.

Hiccup was considerably lighter than other Vikings like Fishlegs and Snotlout, but Astrid should have taken into the effect of gravity. Hiccup crashed into her at full-speed, the girl barely able to keep hold on him as she gripped him tightly. Stormfly staggered under the sudden weight, but recovered quickly as she shook herself. Looking back up at a sudden noise, she gasped as she saw that Ludi was falling too. What happened here to make it rain people and cats?

But Shadowclaw, smaller and quite the expert on flying about now, swooped down elegantly, catching Ludi in between his four feet, holding her tightly as his small black wings pumped up and down

furiously. Toothless screeched to a stop, panting as he turned to hover anxiously beside Stormfly. His green eyes were filled with worry as he looked from Hiccup to the sky, something was off.

Panting heavily, Astrid tore her gaze away from Toothless and down at Hiccup. "You're an idiot." She huffed angrily. "What are you trying to do, give me a heart attack!" Hiccup was staring at her with wide eyes. "I mean, if I didn't see you, you could have fallen to your death, is that what you wanted! Doing suicide jumps during a fire isn't exactly a good plan, Hiccup!" Still, Hiccup didn't even budge. He didn't even show any signs that he was listening to her. "Hiccup?" Astrid asked, her voice quieting somewhat.

She stiffened, reaching out and smacking her hand against Hiccup's cheek a few times, heart thumping faster as she realized that he still wasn't moving. He was as solid as a rock, not even an eyelid flickered at her movements. He stared straight forward with something close to a horrified look on his face. Slowly, Astrid's mind collected and realization slammed into her so fast that the wind got knocked out of her. "Odin!" She gasped sharply, tightening her hold on Hiccup as she madly forced Stormfly back into motion. "Stormfly, we need to get to the Elder's house NOW!" She yelled, her voice sticking somewhat in her throat.

The dragon snapped into motion at once, leaning over and swooping down steeply to the clearing that was Berk. Toothless glanced over at Shadowclaw, eyes as wide as the little Night Fury's. For a moment, the two held each other's gazes, Ludi sinking her claws into Shadowclaw's leg in order to ensure her NOT free falling anymore. Toothless was first to move, growling under his breath as he followed Stormfly, arching down to the ground with Shadowclaw trailing behind closely behind.

The fire had been dulled quite a bit by now. Only a few flickering flames were left, smoke billowing into the night sky and blotting out nearly all of the stars in the sky. The quick work of the Vikings would hopefully ensure more houses to be repaired faster, a long night and day of hard work stretching in front of everybody this time. The fire had been considerably worse than all other dragon attacks, and the work would be longer and tougher to fix. But Ruffnut and Tuffnut had done their job well. The Elder's house bore only scorch marks, not damage too serious and none too permanent.

As soon as Stormfly touched the ground, Astrid swung her legs around the dragon, stumbling off of the Nadder as she righted herself. "Help!" She shouted, fixing Hiccup to lean against her. Holding the Viking up against her, Astrid started to stagger towards the Elder's house, Hiccup's feet dragging against the ground as she did so. People in the clearing started as they saw what was going on, eyes widening with surprise. Astrid dimly wondered if some of them had been expecting something like this to happen with Hiccup. Still, that did not cause her to falter in her strides. "Help!" She shouted again, narrowing her eyes at the Elder's house.

Tuffnut and Ruffnut were still in the sky, making sure that the fires were gone for good before abandoning their post. But they halted as they saw Astrid from below, the two landing down to the ground without an argument for once. The two rushed up to her, looking down at Hiccup with confused faces. "What happened?" Ruffnut asked,

stunned. Astrid opened her mouth to reply, but was cut off as the door slammed open to reveal the Elder, grouchy-eyed and sour-looking as usual.

She didn't even waste a moment before stepping down to the ground and marching her way over to Astrid and Hiccup. She had that look on her face that said: 'Get out the way, I got people to see and things to do.' The stare that made everybody get out of her way before she even saw them. But Astrid remained clinging to Hiccup as the Elder got closer, not even budging as she watched Ruffnut and Tuffnut sidle away from the corner of her eye.

"Let him go." The Elder ordered. Astrid blinked rapidly, let him go where? There wasn't anywhere to put him. As if reading her mind, the Elder pointed down to the ground with an unsympathetic look on her features. "Put him down, you've risked enough by moving him." She said scathingly, eyeing Astrid as she waited rather impatiently. Stiffening, Astrid leaned down, placing Hiccup neatly on the ground hesitantly. A crowd was forming around the scene, murmuring and muttering breaking out among the people as they looked curiously at Hiccup's odd expression.

Pursing her lips, the Elder didn't even look up at the people as she examined Hiccup. "There's other work to be done, here." She snapped to the crowd. "Go do your job, or all of you will have more wounds than you need." And with that, the crowd dispersed almost immediately. Leaving Astrid, Tuffnut, and Ruffnut standing off to the side. Astrid's hands wringed nervously in front of her, and she waited anxiously for the Elder to say something. Something reassuring, she might add. With the Elder, it could go two ways each time.

"Shock." She muttered under her breath, ignoring Astrid's mummer as she glanced over at Ruffnut quickly. "Ruffnut, go into the storage in the back of my house. In the left shelf off to the side, you'll find a bundle of herbs that looks sort of like a flower. But instead of petals, it is covered in small leaves. Bring that out, and be quick about it, we don't have much time." The girl gave a tense nod, somewhat subdued for once as she turned and raced into the house in a flash. Astrid watched her go, shaking her hands up and down nervously as she looked back at the Healer. Toothless, Shadowclaw, and Ludi all sat behind her with Stormfly. It was quite the gathering, and yet nobody spoke. It was silent. Even Ludi remained quiet.

"What do you mean, not much time?" She asked worriedly, looking down at Hiccup's frozen expression. "You'll fix him, right? It's your job!"

"I am well aware of what my job is, thank you." The Elder said tartly, giving her a stern stare that instantly made her quiet. "Shocked people usually have a time window to be saved, it is a very tricky thing to handle. I'll do everything I can, it's not like I won't try. You should learn to have faith in your Elders, young lady." She added as an afterthought. Astrid opened her mouth to give a sharp comeback, but the Elder looked back down at Hiccup, checking his vital signs. Supposing that right now wouldn't be the best time to tick the Elder off, Astrid looked on worriedly.

Shadowclaw and Ludi were sitting side-by-side together, eyes wide as they peered around Astrid, watching the scene unfurl anxiously.

Turning her head, Astrid's eyes softened as she leaned down, sitting next to Shadowclaw as she reached out and put a comforting hand on the dragon's head, slowly petting the small thing. Ludi mewed quietly, scurrying over and nestling herself in Astrid's lap. The kitten was still shaking from either the fright of falling, or the fright that she was feeling right now.

Toothless did not move where he sat. The larger Night Fury's gaze was trained on the sky, his eyes clouded as they flickered back and forth. The cloudy sky was blotted from where Astrid sat, but then again, she didn't know what Toothless was looking at. Did he know more than she did? After all, Toothless had been with Hiccup when he fell. Did he possibly see what had caused the boy to go into shock? See what had made Hiccup fall in the first place? Astrid wished she could almost ask him.

Ruffnut charged back out, flying down the steps with the plant clutched firmly in her hands. Skidding to a stop beside the Elder, Ruffnut jabbed the plants over to the old woman, puffing as she looked anxiously down. "Are these the right ones?" She gasped, righting herself as the Elder looked carefully down at the plant. There was a beat of silence, in which Ruffnut's face paled somewhat. But then the old woman nodded once, muttering out an ungracious thanks as she leaned back down over Hiccup.

Astrid watched as she broke the plant into halves, working on Hiccup without a beat of hesitation. Astrid knew in the back of her mind that she would never be able to do anything like that. She would be freaking out too much. Considering that she would rather be the one getting hurt than the one responsible for all the lives in the village, Astrid knew even if Thor himself came down and ordered her to be a Healer, she would refuse. But then again—the helpless feeling she always got whenever somebody got hurt was something she hated too.

A few agonizing minutes later, the Elder drew back, giving a small, reluctant nod. Astrid straightened, peering down at Hiccup as she bit her lower lip. "He's going to be okay, then?" She pressed. Hiccup was still stiff, but his face had somewhat relaxed, his eyes still wide and looking up at the sky emptily. He was still a sickly pale color, but Astrid saw one of his hands twitch ever so slightly.

The Elder gave another nod. "You should just sit here and talk with him, try to calm him down. I have other people that I have to check up on. If something happens, call me immediately." Pushing herself up from the ground with a wince, the Elder looked down at Hiccup once more. "I swear, this child is one of my most frequent visitors. He does it just to annoy me, I think. Did you know that the first time I saw him was when he was one? Just a year old, and his mother rushed up to me saying that he tried to climb up the wall." She paused, studying Hiccup carefully. Astrid smiled softly to herself as she saw a flash of affection go through the Elder's eyes.

But it was gone as soon as it had come as she shook herself. "Just sit by him and wait for something to happen. It would help if you talked to him, it usually brings them out quicker." Pausing, she started off in the direction of the people working. "I'll find Stoick and pass on the news." She offered. Astrid called out a thank-you, but the Elder showed no signs that she had heard. Ruffnut started, turning over and pushing her brother over to the side. Sensing that

Astrid might have wanted to be alone, the two sidled away, leaving the girl to herself.

Looking back over at Hiccup, she scooted closer, careful not to jar Ludi, who was dozing off in her lap. Shadowclaw bounded over and curled up beside Hiccup, pressing himself against the teen comfortingly. Shadowclaw was the village's dragon mostly, everybody played with him, and he played with everybody. One time, he even spent a night in a little girl's house. But it was obvious that Shadowclaw liked Hiccup the most, maybe even Astrid too. Shadowclaw usually spent his nights curled up with Hiccup with Toothless in the corner.

Toothless followed Shadowclaw's footsteps, although he kept glancing up at the sky. Astrid noticed that his claws were out, digging into the ground as he walked along. He looked angry in fact, wings fluttering uneasily as if he wanted to take off. Did he want to go after whatever had attacked Hiccup? Astrid winced at the question, shying away from it as she looked back down.

Reaching out, she grabbed one of Hiccup's hands in her own, holding it tightly as she looked down at his form. Toothless sat down beside Astrid, leaning over and nudging Hiccup's head, as if shaking the boy from a dream, but he did not budge. Against herself, Astrid smiled down at Hiccup, giving his hand a small squeeze. "You'll be fine." She assured the boy swiftly. "I know you will. After all, look at everything else you recovered from."

Pausing, she gave a small, light laugh. "Climbing the wall?" She asked, thinking back to the Elder's words. "I knew you were thick then, but I didn't think you were that bad." She giggled, Toothless snorting at her words. Suddenly, Astrid stopped, looking up at the sky carefully. She narrowed her eyes as she saw a movement, something outlined against the sky. She swore it was something. Something that looked odd|familiar.

Wings, that was what she had seen. Outstretched against the sky. Was it a dragon from Berk, merely having escaped for a midnight flight without its owner? Or was it something else? Astrid didn't see any color on it, it blended into the sky. Blinking slowly, she looked down at the ground in confusion for a moment or two, seeming almost lost.

But then she straightened, blinking once as she turned and looked over at Toothless. The dragon tilted his head at her, but her thoughts were mulling over at least a mile a minute. The possibilities. The explanations. Hiccup's sudden shock. Was what she was thinking actually true?

Tearing her gaze away from Toothless, Astrid looked back down at Hiccup, the boy's frightened look still glued into the sky. Taking a short breath, Astrid squeezed his hand as hard as she could. "I think I understand." She murmured, glancing up at the sky once more. "Just wake up so you can tell me whether or not I'm right."

3. Chapter 3

A/N: Sorry for that|break thing :3

I hope chu all will forgive me~! ^^

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"What now?" The question was breathed out in a small fog into the winter night, curling in the air to resemble a small cloud before it disappeared completely. Shadowclaw sat on the cliff overlooking the seas of Berk, ears flattened against his head as his large green eyes shone with anxiousness. The question wasn't meant to be heard, the small dragon sitting alone on his perch. But a voice sounded behind him, causing the dragon to start with surprise, spinning around.

"What do you mean?" Toothless asked quietly. Shadowclaw shrank underneath the older dragon's gaze, feeling himself burn with embarrassment as he gave an embarrassed smile to his friend, laughing nervously. Toothless flicked an ear dismissively, taking a few strides forward to come to stop beside Shadowclaw. Sitting down silently, the older dragon raised his head, blinking slowly. "It's going to take a long time for the village to fix this." He remarked sadly.

Shadowclaw craned his neck back to follow his gaze, shuffling his paws on the ground slowly. The Vikings were already at work, assessing the damage of the buildings and breaking off into groups to start their work. Shadowclaw winced softly as he watched the process, looking at the burning, crumbling buildings that still held a few flames on the surface. "I suppose so." He decided finally, his voice soft.

Silence followed, tense and unbearable. Shadowclaw swung back around, hunching his shoulders together tightly as he glanced up into the night sky. The stars were just beginning to show over the rim of fading smoke, it wouldn't be long before they would shine just as bright as ever. That was another thing that Shadowclaw loved about Berk: the stars. He could never see them back at home. The thought made his next words slip out on accident. "You think we were the reason for this?" He blurted, stiffening as soon as he spoke.

But by the way Toothless reacted, Shadowclaw could tell that he hadn't been the only one to consider the fact. But when Toothless refused to speak, Shadowclaw took a deep breath, branching ahead carefully. "I mean- were you that surprised, really?" Glancing over at a stony-faced Toothless, he gave a small sigh. "It is our fault, isn't it? I knew I shouldn't have come here! It probably made them even more angry than before!" His voice had grown into a loud wail by now, the small youngling's eyes wide and scared. "And now Hiccup might-"

"You heard the Elder!" Toothless snapped a little too harshly. Shadowclaw jumped where he sat, shrinking back slightly in a wince as Toothless went on, more gently. "She said that Hiccup would be just fine." Shadowclaw straightened as he realized that Toothless had skipped over the part that Shadowclaw was really asking about.

"But do you think we're the reason they're here?" Shadowclaw pressed, grimacing slightly as he did so. "Why else would they be here? They're after us, right? They're mad that we left! They want us to come back with them! But I don't want to!" He looked up once more at

the large sky. "I love seeing the stars! And I love being with all of the Vikings and having the little ones fight over me!" Taking in a shaky breath, he looked up at Toothless. "They're after us, then. Right?"

But to Shadowclaw's surprise, Toothless closed his eyes tightly, turning away from the smaller dragon as he spoke. "No." He murmured, standing up and still refusing to look Shadowclaw in the eye. "They wouldn't come all the way back here just to take back two dragons that refused to stay with them in the first place. They're doing something else. I don't know what yet, but I'm sure it has nothing to do with us."

Shadowclaw opened his mouth, "And what about-"

Toothless turned away before he could even finish. Shadowclaw blinked rapidly as he watched Toothless leave. The Night Fury retraced his steps back to the Elder's house, stopping beside Astrid and settling down gently. Curling his tail tightly over himself, Toothless shifted his gaze to look down at Hiccup, eyes flashing with something in between anger and something else. Casting one last glance backwards at the sky, Shadowclaw did the same, bounding after Toothless and skidding to a stop beside the older dragon.

Curling up closer to him, Shadowclaw tucked his nose under his paw tightly, closing his eyes and falling asleep instantly.

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The sun was starting to peak over the horizon ever so slowly when Astrid felt a slight twitch in her hand. The movement was small, but it was enough for her to let out a startled squeak, enough for her to jump out of her skin and enough for her to wake Toothless up, the dragon shooting to his feet as his head whipped back and forth. Ludi was shaken from her curled up ball in Astrid's lap, the cat squalling loudly as she was flipped over and thrown onto the ground, skidding forward an inch or two.

"Sorry!" Astrid gasped sharply, lurching forward and trying to grab hold of the small thing. Ludi's fur was bushed out to be twice her size, and she let out a cross spit as Astrid's hands came too close. Turning around, she let out a loud meow as she got to her feet, gathering herself for a moment before she jumped forward and onto Hiccup. The cat leaned over, crouching on the boy's chest as she meowed loudly in his face.

"Ludi." Astrid snapped softly, reaching over and poking the cat hard in the side. Ludi made a face, but refused to budge as she dug her claws down to ensure it. Gnashing her teeth together, Astrid started to poke faster, growling as she did so. "Ludi!" She yelled, louder this time. "Get off!" The cat meowed back, as if mocking her. Shadowclaw raised his head slowly, blinking blearily as he saw the scene, slightly confused on whether he should try and do something to break it up.

It was when Toothless let out a sharp yelp did Astrid finally see what was happening besides Ludi beingâ€¦Ludi. Hiccup was slowly waking up. Taking in a sharp breath, Astrid literally shoved Ludi off onto the ground for the second time, the kitten sprawling on the

grass with a muffled mewl. Not even glancing over at the cat (an action she would feel guilty for later), Astrid leaned over Hiccup anxiously, eyes wide as she waited for him to say something, for him to open his eyes fully.

When Astrid did see the familiar flash of green, it was accompanied with Hiccup going as stiff as board. Panicking, Astrid quickly remembered what the Elder had told her, grabbing Hiccup's hand and squeezing it tightly for comfort. "It's okay!" She said in a rush. "It's fine! You went up on Toothless during the raid that ended a few hours ago! You fell off of Toothless, but the Elder fixed you up." Watching as the boy grimaced slightly, she went on in a somewhat lower voice. "You gave me a real scare." She said bluntly. "I thought you were dying or something! But it's fine now, you're fine and everything is fine."

Hiccup let out a mutter under his breath, moving slowly as he tucked his arms underneath himself, pushing up from the ground in what looked like a painful routine. Astrid blinked with concern, looking down with a furrowed brow as she spoke up. "What hurts? Do you want me to go get the Elder for you? She told me to call her if anything happened. I can do it right now, it's no problem."

Hiccup shook his head, clearing his throat as he shook himself awake. Taking in a short breath, the teen tilted his head up to look up at the sky, and then he started, as if missing something. Craning his neck to look behind himself, he let out a relieved sigh as he saw Toothless. The Night Fury cooed loudly as his human's eyes made contact with his own, the dragon rushing forward and thrusting his muzzle into Hiccup's chest gently. "Hey, bud." He murmured affectionately, smiling softly as he did so.

Ludi started meowing loudly once more, bouncing from one foot to the other as to make sure she wasn't left out. Hiccup started as he looked down at her, and Astrid could only imagine what the cat must have been saying. "I fall twenty feet and you don't even pay any attention to me afterwards!" The thought made Astrid smile, watching as Shadowclaw finally got up and lifted a paw, shoving Ludi to the ground with one small swipe. Spinning around, Ludi retaliated, pouncing on the dragon and starting a play fight that would soon grow out of control in time.

Shoving the thought away stubbornly, Astrid inched forward, biting her lower lip as she did so. Hiccup seemed to notice her discomfort, turning away from Toothless and looking at her with his head tilted to the side slightly. Toothless lied back down on the ground, curling himself around Hiccup protectively as he helped to prop the teen up. Putting a grateful hand on the Night Fury's shoulder, Hiccup stared at Astrid expectantly, waiting for the blonde to say what was on her mind.

Astrid knew she didn't have a long time. People would soon realize Hiccup was awake, and then the Elder would want to check on him. She would have to bring it up now, although it was probably better she wait to do so until Hiccup got better fully. Shaking herself to clear her mind, Astrid looked at Hiccup directly. "Soâ€¦I wanted to ask." She said finally, voice subdued. Hiccup had to listen carefully in order to hear her over the fighting noises that Shadowclaw and Ludi were making. "Up there in the sky. When you fell, you looked like you were looking at something. You looked likeâ€¦you were afraid."

Hiccup's mouth set into a thin line as she spoke. Hands wringing in front of her, Astrid pressed. "What was it?"

"I don't remember." Hiccup said after a moment's pause.

"Yes, you do." Astrid snapped, eyes narrowing as she crossed her arms over her chest. "It had to be something to get you so worked up. It couldn't have been just the fall. You told me that one of the first times you went out on Toothless you fell like that, and you were fine then. Did you see something up there? The things that were causing all of the fire to come onto Berk? They weren't normal dragons, were they?"

Hiccup refused to say anything, his eyes clouding somewhat.

She supposed that meant she had to be the one to say it first.

"The Night Furies?" She guessed, watching as Hiccup immediately glanced back over at Toothless, an uneasy look on his face. "That's it, isn't it? It couldn't have been a normal raid, those were never as powerful. Things like Gronckles and Nadders wouldn't have caused anything like this." She pointed back at the village's houses, which were just now beginning to look somewhat normal. "Is that what made you so scared?"

Ducking his head, Hiccup's bangs fell down to be in front of his eyes, almost as if shielding himself from Astrid. His voice was small when he went on, hands balling into fists at his sides. "It doesn't make sense, Astrid." He murmured softly. Astrid blinked, forehead creasing in confusion. "Why are they back here? Didn't they cause enough back then?"

"You don't know what they're doing!" Astrid said helplessly, wincing. She didn't want to have Hiccup flip out all over again. She had to do her best to keep him calm so that nothing else would happen without the Elder around. She didn't have any idea what to do if he relapsed when she was alone. Glancing around, Astrid tried to remember whether or not she saw the Elder go back into her house or not. But she didn't have any recollection. The old woman must still be going around the village, treating the burns and wounds still. There couldn't have been only a few to treat.

"What else would they be doing!" Hiccup shouted suddenly, causing Astrid to jump for the second time. The teen reached up, eyes wide as he dug his fingernails into his skull. "They can't come back now, though! Everything was just fixed! Shadowclaw just started to like it here, Ludi has gotten over everything and her leg is fixed now, Toothless-" He broke off at his dragon's name, closing his eyes tightly as if shielding himself from all of the memories. Now all he needed was a turtle shell. The thought was meant to be funny, but Astrid shook her head fast, giving him a shaky smile as she reached forward.

"It'll be fine!" She encouraged happily. "We can go tell Stoick! He'll know what to do! You don't have to worry about anything, Hiccup. Everything is going to be fine, I promise you. Nothing bad like that will happen, you hear me? Calm down, okay? You just have to calm down. You're still not yourself right now, you just have to lie down or something." Astrid looked over at Toothless, slightly surprised to see the dragon's ears flattened, his large green eyes

saddened as he looked down at his friend.

'You should feel bad. This is all your fault.'

The venomous thought that had wormed its way into her head made Astrid's eyes widen, made her freeze. She had come to terms to it with Hiccup's head, she had realized the second part to the equation after everything had been over and done with. Hiccup had walked her through every single event with care, proving his friend's innocence. And she had assured him over and over that she knew it all already. But the thought had sprang out at her from nowhere. She wasn't even aware that it had been lurking in the back of her mind all this time. And yet there it was.

But was it right?

Her thoughts were broken as a sharp voice sounded behind her. "That will be enough, Miss Hofferson!" Astrid turned at the sound of her name, immediately relaxing as she saw the Elder. "I think you're needed to help rebuild the Black Smith's shop." She said sternly, looking down with one eyebrow raised. "They would appreciate your help, considering you've done nothing at all to contribute all morning."

Ducking her head, the girl uttered a small apology, her ears burning red as she felt herself grow warm. She glanced over at Hiccup as she pushed herself up to her feet, a worried look coming over her face as she saw that Hiccup had buried his face in his knees, hands still stuck in his mussed-up hair. The Elder saw her concerned look, patting Astrid's hand twice before she pushed past her to get to the boy.

"Come on, get up." She said rather gently, a new kind of glint in her eye as she helped Hiccup to his feet. "Let's get you something to eat, I suppose. Not like you would be much help in rebuilding, eh?" The words were in the middle of being humorous and true. Hiccup's arm reached over his chest to grab his other, feeling shaky as he walked forward with small steps. His head was reeling, and he felt like he was filled with air. Like he could push off the ground and just keep on floating at the same speed without even trying.

He must have staggered, the boy feeling the Elder catch him swiftly, pushing him so that he was balanced. "Be careful." She instructed sternly. "You don't have your land legs yet. When we get inside, you need to sit down." But going up the steps would be the first thing the Elder had to worry about. Hiccup felt like he was filled with lead. It took him at least five tries to get up onto the first step, his foot never seeming to get high enough to clear the first few inches.

His mind was somewhere else. It had been left back where Toothless was sitting with Shadowclaw and Ludi, green eyes trained on his human as he staggered away. It was left up in the sky, where he had first seen it. It was left there after he had fallen. It was left back when Toothless had disappeared to the Night Fury island. It had been dragged back to that time as unwillingly as it ever could be.

Hiccup flinched at nothing but a thought. Nothing but a nagging doubt. He flinched away from the prospect of it all starting over again. He flinched at a passing glance of something that was near the

impossible. And yet it seemed it was possible. Second step now. The teen raised his eyes up to the sky, the sun poking its milky white light over the island of Berk, a sharp glare that made him blink rapidly in surprise. The sky was empty now, nothing in it to show but a few clouds scudding across the blue landscape. What he had seen was long gone.

He hoped he had seen nothing. That it had been a trick of the light.

But there was no denying the supreme and familiar hate that had shone in those deep green eyes. He didn't know how, and he didn't know why. But it was all about to start over again.

4. Chapter 4

A/N: *hides behind my wall of shame* â€¦.I am so sorry T^T

æ|I was at Naka-kon, I didn't have time to be here! I was all the way in Kansas! I dressed up like Hiccup and I brought along my Toothless pillow pet! And guess what was my luck? I WAS THE ONLY HICCUP THERE FOR BOTH DAYS! Everybody loved me so much and they were hugging me and taking so many pictures! I was awesome. Taking the fact in that I was the only Hiccup and the people might not have seen me again, I ended up having to be in a lot of awkward poses and places for pics. One of them I was in the bathroom. Another I was walking back to my mom holding my hotdog and french-fries in on hand, my soda in the other, and my Toothless crammed in front of me as I tried to hold on. Great picture time, huh? ;)

[illegible]

"WE WERE SO CLOSE!" The roar exploded like a crack in the somber silence, bouncing off of the walls and reverberating in every dragons' ears as they winced from the noise. The dragon paced back and forth angrily, tossing its head back and forth widely as its eyes were narrowed into furious slits. Nobody spoke, nobody moved, wide eyes merely flickering to one another as they tried to figure out what they were supposed to do as of right now. Keeping silent meant that this could be longer than it really needed to be. Going up would probably get them their head dismembered from their body. They chose to stay still, sitting neatly in the clearing as they looked one emptily.

All but one of them. One of the Night Furies lifted her head high, jaw locking fiercely as she stalked forward, tense and stiff as she glared at the dragon that was still pacing back and forth. "Fleetfoot!" She shouted sternly, not even wavering as the rage-filled dragon whirled around to face her. She didn't even flinch when the dragon stalked forward, getting nose-to-nose with her as he glared at her hotly. His wings fluttered restlessly at his sides, the dragon's claws scoring the ground over and over as he bared his teeth.

"What is it?" He snarled, drawing back with a sour look on his mug as he straightened. He obviously thought himself higher than the female, drawing himself up self-importantly as his eyes flashed with something of contempt as he looked down. "You know I have no patience

for something of yourself, Mistyeyes." He said the name with venom, sly smirks coming from the dragons that were gathered closer around him. Other dragon, the ones off to the side, shifted uneasily, eyes shooting worried looks over at the dragon that had been the leader figure for so long. She did not react though, her face blank as she looked fixedly at the male dragon. He went on though, voice still thick with malice as he looked away, sticking his nose into the air. "We all know what you are, Mistyeyes." He snorted. "You're a HUMAN lover."

A growl came from the side of the crowd, but Mistyeyes only held her head a little higher, eyes flashing dangerously by now as her claws unsheathed. "I am not a human lover, Fleetfoot." She snarled, the crowd quieting immediately at the anger hidden thinly in her voice. "But I am not a human destroyer as you intend to be." Fleetfoot glanced over at her as she spoke. "What are we doing here, Fleetfoot? You have no reason to be doing whatever it is you're trying to do!" Her anger mounted as she went on, turning and looking at the Night Furies all crowded together. "We do not belong this far from home! We need to return, you have no reason to be attacking harmless people that never did anything to us!"

Murmuring amongst the dragons helped to steel Mistyeyes as she went on. "You drag the whole Clan down here just to amuse yourself in terrorizing innocent people!" She snapped, Fleetfoot's sour look deepening as he glared at her hotly. "Let's end this charade, you had your fun! I sat back today and watched you attack the village, but I refuse to do it again. We're going back, whether you want to or not." With that, a little more of her leader side came out as her voice sharpened, she pushed past Fleetfoot and started for the edge of the island, muttering under her breath as she cast a glance back at him. "I cannot believe how foolish you could get." She said coldly. "Dragging everybody over her for some sort of silly revenge!"

Fleetfoot's tail flicked to the side dismissively. "It's not all of the Clan." He said briskly, Mistyeyes deadpanning as he spoke. "After all, those who were too cowardly stayed behind. Too cowardly to get a little blood on themselves, of course. Who don't care what happens to us if we let those humans run free." Getting to his feet, he stalked forward and intercepted Mistyeyes, standing between her and the water with a triumphant grin. Taking a short step backwards, Mistyeyes growled underneath her breath at the movement, standing tensely as she looked up at Fleetfoot. "Which brings me to wonder." The dragon mused. "Why did you _drag _yourself all the way over here if you love humans so much? Wanted to make a few human friends? Is that it? Hmm?"

Mistyeyes twitched as laughter rippled among those who were watching. Squaring her shoulders, she tried to match Fleetfoot's height, trying to push down her anger at being mocked. The fact of her being younger than Fleetfoot rang in her mind, but she pushed that down also. Drawing herself up, she spoke once more, voice dark. "You know I would never do something like that." She snapped, eyes flashing. "But I also wouldn't sit by and watch my friends become wracked up in your silly little charade!"

"Oh really?" Fleetfoot demanded, hackles raising immediately. He lunged forward, knocking her aside. Gasping, Mistyeyes stumbled slightly, regaining her footing in time to look up, blinking rapidly

as Fleetfoot turned to face the rest of the dragons crowded around together. "She seems to have forgotten what the Vikings did to us!" He shouted, his voice traveling over the cluster. Ears perked with interest, shoulders sagged, others looked away, trying to be indifferent. "She seemed to have forgotten the fact that they killed many of our own when they ambushed us! How they left leaving us in chaos! How they turned one of our own against us!"

Asher got to his feet, eyes blazing with anger as he raised his voice to be as loud as Fleetfoot's. "They killed my mate!" He yowled angrily, his glare raking over those surrounding him. "Who are they to kill other's loved ones and not take the same in return? They're monsters, killing dragons for so long without a passing care! We're the Night Furies, the strongest dragons in the world! We are the ones who are meant to be teaching the humans a lesson!"

The Night Fury weaved forward to stand beside Fleetfoot, chest puffed out importantly, head drawn up majestically. The two stood shoulder-to-shoulder, eyes both gleaming with bloodlust as they swept over the other dragons, looking about ready to pounce forward on their prey. They looked ready to kill. "Who's with us!" Fleetfoot called out, swinging his head back to look at Mistyeyes critically. "We cannot afford to have stragglers amongst us. We have to reap revenge from the humans who ruined us and others!"

The others lifted their heads back, yowling loudly in agreement, flapping their wings and causing blasts of wind to shoot across the clearing of the island. Burning with rage, Mistyeyes shot to her feet, having to raise her voice as loud as it could go to be able to be heard over the roar of the noise. "REVENGE FOR WHAT!" She screamed, Fleetfoot's gaze slightly amused as he looked back at her. "WHAT HAVE YOU FOR ANY REASON TO START THIS?"

"You have forgotten about Toothless." Fleetfoot snarled, stalking back over to her.

"What about him?" Mistyeyes snorted, looking at Fleetfoot as if he were trash.

"The humans turned him against us!" He snarled. Mistyeyes rolled her eyes, shaking her head with a frustrated snort, but he went on. "Think about it, Mistyeyes! He was perfectly fine with us before the human came along! He was fitting in with everybody, he BELONGED with us. And he still DOES. The humans took him from all of us, not to mention turned him against Nightflight!" At the she-dragon's name, his eyes burned even hotter, claws sinking into the ground. "How could you play pity for people so vile? They don't deserve to live!"

Mistyeyes gave him a sour look. "What your saying is vile, Fleetfoot." She snapped quietly.

At this, Fleetfoot's eyes narrowed. "Then leave." He snarled, catching Mistyeyes off guard as the younger dragon straightened. "Like I said before, we don't have room for people like Toothless on our side. Why don't you go and be the village's pet, just like Toothless. I'm sure you'll find a better life being a child's plaything than a true Night Fury. They stole Shadowclaw from us too, who's to say what else they'll end up doing, Mistyeyes."

"You're not after the people." Mistyeyes murmured, eyes searching Fleetfoot's.

"Of course I am." Fleetfoot said dismissively, flicking an ear as he looked down at her once more. "I'm after all of them just the same. Humans shouldn't be here in the first place, dragons are the true rulers of the earth, and we should make it that way once more." Blinking once, he laughed lightly. "But you are right about one thing." He said finally, Mistyeyes leaning forward and looking over at him with a steady look. "There is one." Fleetfoot's eyes darkened. "The one that caused it all. That twig that got free from us. If it wasn't for him, we would have both Toothless and Shadowclaw still with us, along with all the others killed by the Vikings. Funny. That such a big mess could come from a mere twig. But he will not escape our grasp once more. I'll make sure of that this time, yes I will."

Glancing over out into the sea, Mistyeyes sighed heavily, picturing the little island of Berk. It had looked peaceful when the dragons first started to fly there. Mistyeyes had hovered by, watching with a horrified look as it slowly got engulfed by flames. She closed her eyes tightly, blowing out a breath in a huff as her mind flashed back. She had seen Toothless and Shadowclaw, come to think of it. Although that wasn't the thing she was looking at mainly. She had watched the human, having recognized the male from the cave a while ago.

He had looked scared. That was the word. He kept making loud yelling noises, trying to yank clumsily on Toothless as they dodged the fireballs sent down from the other Night Furies. Mistyeyes had realized she had felt something odd. Something she didn't associate with humans most of the times. Usually she was neutral with them, keeping to herself unless they attacked first. She never felt anything for them. But this time she had felt something. Something strong.

She had felt pity. Sadness for the fear that the male was going through. It was small, it was only a child. It wasn't big and strong like most males. It was short, skinny and weak. Something about the human had made a twinge go through Mistyeyes's heart, making horror go through her as she watched the child fall from its dragon's saddle. She had actually felt something the odd part out of it. Opening her eyes, Mistyeyes looked down at her feet, thoughts and questions crowding in her mind.

Blinking rapidly, she saw that Fleetfoot was still looking down at her, waiting for her to say something. Waiting for her to decide if she wanted to stay with the Night Furies or not. Ears flattening, Mistyeyes glanced back over at the sea, at the churning waves that looked dark and menacing all of a sudden. She then looked back at the crowd of dragons, who were now racing and tumbling and fighting with another, getting into mock fights as they ducked and swiped. This Clan was all Mistyeyes ever knew. It was all she could stay with. It was all she could imagine doing.

But this wasn't her Clan anymore it was something else. A band of dragons bent on an unnecessary revenge that would surely lead to many deaths. The Vikings were not soft, they would start killing as soon as the dragons set foot on the island. Mistyeyes knew that much, but it seemed like Fleetfoot wasn't aware of the fact. All he saw was

red, blinded by rage and sorrow at what the Clan had lost. Humans had been attacking dragons ever since the first times began, why should this turn everything around like it was? Sure, humans had never come into contact with Night Furies before now, but surely Fleetfoot knew that this was a routine thing for some of the other dragons?

Or used to be. Mistyeyes swallowed as she remembered Toothless's explanation of how the two races had come together at Berk. What was it he had said that the twig had been responsible for it. A small thing had been the reason that dragons and humans now lived together at Berk. But the only Night Furies there were two, it would be lonely living there. Separated from family and friends, all that you've ever come to know. Toothless might have been willing to give it all up for whatever reason, but Mistyeyes couldn't wrap her mind around it.

Besides, if she went there, she didn't think she would be welcome anyways. Fleetfoot seemed to know that at least, a smug look on his face as he waited patiently for her to say something. About the only thing he's ever patient with, of course. Only when he was waiting for somebody to confess they were wrong. Wings twitching with annoyance, Mistyeyes had half a mind to open her mouth and continue the argument even though she knew she would be stalling. But he would see right through her if she did, making everything even worse.

Sighing heavily, Mistyeyes hung her head, wings going limp as she looked at Fleetfoot out of the corner of her eye. The Night Fury snickered at the defeat, pushing himself up to his feet and giving a laugh. "At least you're starting to catch on, Mistyeyes." Fleetfoot sneered. The female's eyes narrowed as he went on. "I'm in charge now, not some puny little she-dragon. You made people soft and weak, I'm going to make the Night Furies great once more, I'm going to make them feared like in the old times! Something you never would have been able to do."

"And how will you do that, Fleetfoot?" Mistyeyes asked, voice a low growl.

"I'm glad you asked." He said stiffly, turning and looking over to the side. "I'll do it with the help of somebody who actually knows what I'm talking about. Somebody who won't get cold feet like some old leaders." With that, he shot a look back at Mistyeyes, the female merely holding it with a blank expression as she waited for him to go on. "She knows that the humans must be attacked, she knew all along. If you hadn't interfered, she might have killed that stupid twig before anybody could stop her. But since that is all in the past and I am such a forgiving dragon, I'll forgive you of that little blunder and I won't hold it against you. But she might." He added as an afterthought.

"Dragons like you have no fear." Mistyeyes said lowly, voice thick with a warning as she looked at him carefully. "Fear is something you need, something you live with. It tells you when to stop what you are doing, and tells you when to retreat. Without fear you are venerable! Without fear you have nothing to keep track of things, you just keep on going without a thought. This is going to be dangerous, Fleetfoot. You cannot deny that more dragons will just die if you do this. The Vikings will just continue killing the Night Furies in self-preservation! You are lying to these dragons when you say this will help them. You are lying to your friends!"

He chuffed with laughter. "Please." He sighed. "If you're just going to get in our way, you can leave. The sea looks very inviting, doesn't it?" He glanced up at the sky, which was gathering with dark storm clouds. "Lovely day for a flight, hmm? There's always that, Mistyeyes. Care for a swim? No matter where you'll go, you'll get wet."

The female twitched angrily. "Dragons like you always get under my skin." She growled.

"Do you expect every dragon to be like you?" Mistyeyes started at a voice up ahead, a dragon weaving elegantly through the crowd to approach the two others. "You think every dragon should be weak, lame, small, softâ€¦that doesn't sound much like a Night Fury, now does it? If you ask me, it sounds more like a Terrible Terror than a Night Fury. Perhaps that was what you were always meant to be, it makes sense, you know." The small Night Fury made a face as the figure came to a stop in front of her. "A dragon should be loyal to its people, isn't that right? That's all we're doing, Mistyeyes. There really is no harm to be found in it."

Pausing for a moment, Mistyeyes threw back her head in a laugh. She laughed for a few moments, the two dragons sitting side by side, eyes bored as they watched her, waiting for her to stop. When she did, she still chuckled underneath her breath, eyes flashing as she lifted her head. Taking in a few breaths, Mistyeyes looked at the newcomer with a tilted head. Her eyes glittered with strange amusement, and when she spoke, her voice was still riddled with dark giggles.

"You're one to talk about loyalty." She laughed. "Nightflight."

5. Chapter 5

A/N: I'm here to show you all that I care in updating quicker than last time! I loved all the reviews I got from last chapter, and I hope I get as many this time! And do not fret all of you, my love for HTTYD will stay permanently, no matter how long it takes for me to update! You all know I have no life, right? :P

READY TO JUMP AROUND IN THIS CHAPTER? Hopefully it shall be epic.

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Running. Tripping. Stumbling. Hiccup's breath came in rapid gasps as he raced forward, eyes wide and heart pounding with fear. He was clumsy as he tried to push himself faster, panicking as he heard loud thumps getting closer and closer to him. The world around him was getting darker, misshaping itself as Hiccup tried in vain to see through the oncoming darkness. Throwing his hands out in front of him, he felt himself slow as he tried to find his way through.

He froze as his palm landed on a smooth, curved surface. Panting, Hiccup's eyes slowly widened, bringing up his other hand and smacking it against the rock. Spinning around, Hiccup did the same to all the walls that were now surrounding him, all coming out as slick rock. "No!" Hiccup screamed with frustration, spinning in a full circle as

he saw that walls of a cave enclosed him tightly. Pressing his back against the wall, he trembled as he heard a spine-chilling roar getting closer and closer to where he was pinned.

Shaking uncontrollably, Hiccup saw a gleam of green eyes from the shadows, barley a moment before something shot forward quickly, leaping for him and crashing into the boy at full-force. Grunting in pain, Hiccup felt himself land on the ground with a loud bang, the boy's eyes clashing with large, round, green ones. The image slowly took place, the female dragon crouching over him, her pupils dilated with anger as she dug her claws into his stomach.

He opened his mouth to scream, but it wouldn't come out. His mouth flexed open, a silent scream coming out of it as the female straightened, an odd sort of rumbling coming from her that sounded remarkably like laughter. All of a sudden, she changed, morphing into a different dragon, one that made Hiccup stiffen with surprise. It flashed by rapidly, barley lasting a second. The female changed from herself to Toothless, the dragon's familiar green eyes leering as he looked down at Hiccup. The change was rapid, flashing back and forth without pausing, without hesitating. Hiccup swallowed the lump in his throat, fingernails digging into the rock underneath him as his eyes widened. Finally, the Night Fury raised its head, still flashing back and forth rapidly, eerily. Green gas bubbled in the back of the throat, and that was when Hiccup closed his eyes tightly and screamed.

Something bopped him on the nose sharply, causing him to jolt up immediately, eyes wide and heart hammering. For a moment, darkness closed on him, and he thought for a fleeting moment he was dead. But then there was a muffled mew, cross eyes gleaming over at him from the end of the bed. Ludi shuffled her paws underneath her, face sour as she looked at her human angrily. Hiccup blinked rapidly, looking around as he realized with relief he was in his room.

The sun wasn't up yet, it wasn't even peeking over the horizon. Raising a shaky hand up to the side of his head, Hiccup hesitated for a moment, staying still as he looked down at the bed blankly. Tearing his gaze over to the side unwillingly, Hiccup's eyes flickered over to the edge of the room, jumping immediately as he saw that Toothless's head was raised, the dragon looking at him carefully. The jump had nearly caused him to fall off of his bed, a small squeak coming from the boy as he snapped his mouth closed tightly.

Toothless's ears flattened to his head at once, tilting his head to the side. It was then that Hiccup saw the concern in the dragon's green orbs, forcing his fear away roughly. This was Toothless, this wasn't the thing from his dream. Blowing out a huff of air, Hiccup reached up, rubbing the back of his neck uncomfortably. "Sorry." He breathed out slowly, closing his eyes for a moment or two as his bit his lower lip. "â€|Bad dream, I guess." He offered, not sure whether he was talking to himself or not.

Surprising Hiccup slightly, Toothless gave a chuff, pushing himself up to his feet and making his way over to Hiccup's bed, whining slightly as he rested his head on the edge. He looked up at Hiccup with what seemed like an almost apologetic look. The teen blinked slowly, eyes traveling down to Toothless's tail, the black fin that shone up at him seeming to almost mock him. He opened his mouth, once

again nothing came out as he looked down glumly at the tail.

Ludi perked her ears, straightening as she looked over at Hiccup, sensing something was the matter. The fluffy cat gave a small mew, pushing herself forward and plodding over to her human as she looked up at him with her big eyes. Pushing her face into his side, the kitten mewled loudly, her voice seeming to echo in the darkness. Giving a light sigh, Hiccup looked out the window again, back at Toothless. He knew he wasn't dreaming anymore, and yet the sight of the dragon rubbed him the wrong way as of right now. Something he thought would never happen.

"I'm going to go get some air." He mumbled tiredly, shooting Toothless a quick smile, and turning, swinging himself over the bed and straightening himself a little clumsily. He was always worse on his leg in the morning, if this could be considered a morning, really. Technically it was, but whatever. Scanning the room, Hiccup blinked, realization slamming into him.

"Shadowclaw?" He called out into the small room. He expected to hear a small response, a chirp or at least something from where the dragon usually slept. But there was nothing except for silence. Looking from Ludi, over to Toothless, he raised his eyebrows, but they merely stared back at him, not giving him any clues to where the smaller Night Fury could have gotten himself off to. He really should have less people in the room with him when he slept, it was like he was running a zoo in here.

Shaking his head to clear it, Hiccup turned, walking over silently to the door and opening it carefully, as to make it not creak. Peering out into the hall, Hiccup blinked, shifting from foot to foot nervously. If his father saw him right now, he would be met with a lot of questions, something that he didn't feel like answering right now. He didn't know where he was going, he would probably just wander until the sun rose. The thought almost made him want to retreat back to his bed and fall back asleep, his body weighted down with exhaustion. But he knew even if he went back in there and lied down, he would never be able to fall back asleep after what just happened.

Making sure that the area was clear, Hiccup stepped out into the hall, closing the door with a small click behind him. Biting his lower lip, Hiccup made his way carefully down the stairs, making sure that he kept quiet as he took it one step at a time. Stairs sometimes proved to be difficult with his leg, but he managed to do it without much of a hassle this time, to his relief. He made it to the door quicker than he expected, and slipped outside without much to his relief.

Breathing out a breath of air that turned into a foggy cloud, Hiccup narrowed his eyes, looking over the burnt remains of Berk. The sight made his stomach twist into a knot, he had almost forgotten about the damage to his town in everything else that had happened. But nevertheless, Hiccup started forward, feet crunching in what little snow there was left. Most of it was snowmelt, the boy wincing slightly as the cold crept through his boots. Shivering, Hiccup hugged himself tightly, rubbing his hands over his arms rapidly to try and create some sort of friction from him and the cold weather.

Glancing back at his house, Hiccup felt a wave of guilt wash over him, causing him to stop in his tracks. Lowering his head somewhat, he stared at the ground, his hair covering his features as he let out a gusty sigh. The thought of him feeling like this made him want to slap himself. His hands fisted at his sides, and he glared down at the ground. "Stupid." He muttered, raising his hands and banging on either sides of his head.

Why couldn't he just forget whatever Toothless did before? Why couldn't he get it out of his head? Toothless was his best friend! He was the dragon that gave him everything he had now, he was the thing that made Hiccup finally take a stand for himself. Before Toothless gave along, Hiccup just let himself get walked around on. If Toothless wasn't here, it would still be that way. Toothless had saved his life, in more ways than one. If he forgot all of that for what happened before—|who was he?

The thought made him start, looking back up at the house with wide eyes. The fact was that he didn't know. He didn't know who he was without Toothless. He wouldn't be himself, he wouldn't be what he knew. When Toothless had left, Hiccup had just become slower and slower each day, he had refused to get up in the morning, each chore and task in front of him would be done with the least amount of effort, the least amount of care. He just wasn't right without Toothless there by his side.

And ignoring him like this—|he still had the tail. The thought came off sort of cruel to Hiccup, but it was true. Without the old tailfin, Toothless wasn't grounded like before. He could take off on his own accord now. If he kept pushing Toothless away—|the dragon wouldn't leave him again, surely? But—|if he felt unappreciated—|but it wasn't like Toothless to do something like that. It seemed like Hiccup didn't know anything about Toothless these days.

"Hey, there. Lovely night for a stroll, hmm?" Hiccup started, turning as he blinked rapidly. Astrid stood behind him, a small smile on her face as she looked at him carefully. She was bundled up tightly in a coat, something that Hiccup envied. The teen looked at her with slightly narrowed eyes, looking at the dim bag underneath her eyes. Before he could ask, Astrid started to speak, cutting him off. "You okay? I don't usually trek out in freezing cold weather before the sun comes up, but—|you seemed pretty upset."

Instead of answering, Hiccup said bluntly, "How did you know I was out here?"

Astrid merely shrugged, giving him another smile. When he didn't return it, her smile faltered slightly, the girl giving a small sigh that made her bangs ruffle up in front of her. "Listen—|" She started, wincing slightly as she spoke. Hiccup regarded her with an expressionless face. "I know what happened was a little—|unexpected. But you can't let it get to you like you're doing, alright? It's tough seeing you like this, you know?"

"I get it, Astrid." Hiccup growled, looking away darkly. "You've said it only thirty times."

But the blonde only rolled her eyes dismissively. "It's because Odin knows you never listen the first few times around." She sighed,

amusement bordering the edge of her voice. "So instead of lying to both yourself, and me—how about you tell me what's really bugging you?" She raised an eyebrow at the boy, who had taken on a sour look. "There's no denying it, Hiccup. The sooner you admit it, the sooner it will go away for good."

The teen licked his lips, turning his head and looking over to the side at the ground, going silent. Stuffing her hands into the pockets of her coat, Astrid looked at Hiccup, patiently waiting for the teen to reply. Overhead, the blonde started as she realized that snow was falling overhead, growing thicker and thicker as it started to speed up. She barley had time to appreciate the small little flakes before Hiccup spoke up, the girl turning back to him immediately.

"You saw the tailfin." Hiccup murmured, closing his eyes.

"That could mean anything-

"And what if it doesn't?" Hiccup demanded, turning and glaring at her as frostily as the snow. Astrid stopped, blinking rapidly. "Think about it, Astrid! Those were obviously Night Furies earlier, it just couldn't have been any other dragon! The blasts were too powerful." Glancing back over at his house, Hiccup's voice dropped considerably. "I mean- last time he destroyed it. What if it means something more than just forgetting about it? What if he isn'tâ€|Toothless anymore?"

"Of course he'll be Toothless." Astrid said soothingly, reaching out and putting a hand on his shoulder. "Listen, you two are the best pair on the island, everybody knows that. It would take something a lot more than something like that to rip you two apart. The real problem I think is the fact that you don't trust him. You don't trust him to keep being your friend and keep being the same dragon he's always been. And don't forget, you still have to be the same Hiccup. You have to be able to trust him like you did the first time you found him grounded with your net."

Glancing over at her, Hiccup gave her a ghost of a smile, still slightly crooked. But it was gone as soon as it came. Words tumbled out of his mouth before he could stop them. "It was her." He blurted out quickly, Astrid not looking as surprised as he thought she would have. "It was the same dragon, I'm sure of it. The female that started all of this." He closed his eyes tightly, gritting his teeth. "I thought she was gone."

"So did I." Astrid murmured, looking at her friend with sympathy.
"It'll be okay."

"I just-" Hiccup broke off, pausing before going on. "I just don't want to loose him again, Astrid."

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"I do NOT want to loose him again, Fleetfoot, do you understand?" Nightflight demanded, whirling around on the Night Fury as he met her gaze head-on. The female was in a rage, eyes wild with anger and teeth bared as she looked at the male. "We will not fail again, Fleetfoot, do you hear me? We can't afford to loose another time. They'll begin to get wiser than us and it wont be as easy. I thought

you told me you knew what you were doing!" Her eyes glowed with fury as she looked at the male expectantly. "Explain yourself."

Fleetfoot paused for a moment, looking slightly awkward. "I did have it all under control, Nightflight." He said, wincing slightly at the sound of the female's grunt of disbelief. "I was caught off-guard by accident, it was entirely my fault. I promise I'll do better next time." He lowered his head, shame filling him as Nightflight rolled her eyes at the excuse.

"You do know what we are trying to accomplish? The importance of this mission?" She snapped irritably. "We have all of the other dragons waiting behind us, we are the leaders of the event, we can't let them down because we got DISTRACTED. We are here to wipe the puny island of Berk clear of any human life! We came to retrieve both Toothless and Shadowclaw. Without the insolent human there to mess things up, we'll have BOTH of them back here with us."

"Killing the people is easier said than none." Fleetfoot mumbled. "They seem to be quite experienced with this type of things happening." He paused at Nightflight's look, quieting at once as he shied away. "But I'm not saying we should stop trying, of course." He added quickly. "After all, this was only the first time. Err- when do you want the next raid to beâ€¦exactly?"

"The sooner the better." She said without hesitation. "They'll be too busy rebuilding. This time we have to be more efficient in finding the key people. We have to find Toothless and Shadowclaw for one, we need to know where they are. We need to find that human, too." She added darkly, eyes narrowing slowly. "But I want you to bring it to me. Alive. I want to be the one to kill it. Anybody who disobeys those orders will be in trouble, do you hear me Fleetfoot?" She leaned in close, pupils dilating. "He's MINE. I will not loose anything else to him."

[illegible]

"I won't loose anything else to those Night Furies." Hiccup mumbled, ducking his head as he looked over at Astrid. "It was bad enough the first time, I don't know what I would do the second time. Is that why they're back? Are they going to try and take Toothless again?" Should I keep him inside? Would he stay inside? Would he hate me? The questions went unvoiced as he looked over at Astrid worriedly. But the blonde shook her head, not able to answer him for once as she looked on carefully.

"I think you might need to take a breather." Astrid murmured, reaching out once more. "Try to go back to sleep-"

"I can't go back to sleep." Hiccup hissed, side-stepping away from her. The girl started at the movement, slightly surprised as she blinked rapidly. But Hiccup didn't pay any attention to it, shivering from the cold as his teeth chattered loudly. He trembled and shook, hopefully more cold than anything. "æ|Sorry." He breathed, grumbling something under his breath before he repeated. "I can't go back to sleep."

Astrid's shoulders slumped as she looked at the bags the had rimmed below Hiccup's once-lively green eyes. Had something as small as this

reawakened this much fear inside Hiccup? But- looking around at the burnt and charred buildings, she had to admit that it wasn't that much of a small thing. Was Hiccup right? Could it have been a form of threat? The word sent chills down her spine. "Hiccup, you have to try." She whispered in the dark.

Hiccup did not reply.

"Toothless isn't going anywhere as of right now, right?" Astrid prompted, giving him a small smile. "It's fine right now, nothing is going happen, you have to trust me on this one, okay?" Tilting her head to the side, she walked forward slowly, leaning over and wrapping Hiccup in a tight hug, the boy warm compared to the cold weather around them, even without a coat on. "You have to trust Toothless and he has to trust you. That's all you need now."

"But what if it isn't good enough?" Hiccup whispered brokenly.

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"And what if it isn't good enough?" Nightflight demanded, fixing Fleetfoot with an angry glare. "You say that you will try your best, and yet you might slip up like last time. We can't afford things like that, Fleetfoot, do you understand?" Her voice had risen to a roar, the male wilting away slightly. In front of the other dragons, he was a brave and powerful leader figure. But when Nightflight came forward, he found that he couldn't find the words he used as a leader. The confident ones slipped his mind.

"I assure you that I will make sure to have everybody on the same wing-"

"I should be up there with you in the front lines." Nightflight snarled, cutting him off. The female paced back and forth, looking much like he did a while ago as she whipped around to face him. "Putting somebody as stupid as you in charge of all the others isn't the best idea I would be smart enough to put down. I should be leading the others, I'm the only one that grasps the object of importance here."

"Nightflight, your wounds are still healing." Fleetfoot said firmly. "You have to stay in the back until you are to be fully healed." At the female's sharp look, he added: "It wont be long now, though. You said yourself that you can do most things now. That was better than the way it was last week."

At this, Nightflight relaxed slightly, blinking as she lifted her head into the air. "Yes, I suppose." She sighed, breath curling in the air. "I'll be ready to fight in a short time." She murmured. "And then I'll be able to be on the front lines. I'll be able to make those humans suffer myself. I'll be able to find Toothless." Her eyes clouded as she spoke the dragon's name, Fleetfoot remaining quiet as he regarded the female cautiously. Shaking herself, Nightflight gave a firm nod. "For now we'll continue attacking the humans while they are trying to rebuild their homes. That way when I am healed, they will have nothing to protect them." The dragon's eyes were merciless as she growled darkly, the dragoness laughing at something she thought was funny.

Fleetfoot did not know what to do, remaining silent as he dipped his head to her. "And I'll be right behind you." He promised, although he wasn't sure the female heard him.

[illegible]

Finally, Astrid drew backwards, studying Hiccup carefully. "I want you to try." She said finally, reaching over and brushing snow off of Hiccup's shoulders affectionately. "I want to try and sleep, because then you'll be even worse tomorrow, and we don't want that, right?" When Hiccup didn't laugh or smile, she frowned. "You have to try, Hiccup. You can't just not sleep for your whole life. Toothless isn't going to do anything to you, he'll be sleeping right by you. Nothing is going to happen tonight, I know that for a fact."

Hiccup did say anything, but Astrid could see the faint flash of relief in the boy's eyes. The blonde smiled once more, this time more genuine as she giggled somewhat. Leaning over, Astrid pressed her lips to Hiccup's cheek shortly, drawing back and giving him a reassuring squeeze on his hand. "You'll be fine." She promised. "We all will, you'll see. I'm always right."

Hiccup's eyes were clouded in thought, and finally, Astrid decided that she had to leave. Backing up slightly, she turned and started retrace her footsteps back to her house, her footprints having already been covered up by the snow. She was halfway gone when suddenly, she heard her name behind her. Turning, Astrid blinked as she looked at Hiccup, the boy's hands fisted at his sides. His eyes were burning with a new kind of fire as he looked over at her, his jaw locked with determination.

"She's not going to do it again." He said thinly, almost growling out the words.

Astrid turned fully, looking at Hiccup, faintly surprised.

Hiccup looked down at the ground almost angrily, teeth starting to ache from the pressure of grinding them together. Nightflight's claws sunk deep into the earth, the dragoness's eyes alight with bloodlust as she scowled deeply. The boy let out a shaky breath, raising his voice so that Astrid heard it loudly where she stood. Nightflight raised her voice into a triumphant roar that seemed to shake the whole island. The two opened their mouths, shouting out the next words completely in sync.

"TOOTHLESS IS MINE!"

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A/N: Pft. Did not know how to word that part. I feel like a middle schooler. I mean- I am. But it sounds like they're fighting over a boy. XP

But it's a lot more epic, you know? I hope you liked what I did. See what I did there? :")

Something big is going to happen soon! Strap yourselves in tightly

So anyway, you know how I told you I was Hiccup for that anime convention? Well, every morning we woke up really early, so the last day we did that, I was REALLY tired from the convention the other day. So I dressed up like Hiccup, and I did this stuff: I rammed my hip into the edge of a counter. I accidentally tripped over my Toothless pillow pet. I burned myself with the flat iron. I rammed into a wall. And I tripped over the steps at least twenty times. All in the course of an hour.

Thank you. Thank you very much o-o

A/N: Special thanks to Sabre out there! I was kind of stumped and she helped me figure this part out! So, thank you very much! ^^

The icy cold wind rushed past her as Mistyeyes glided across the sky, eyes slightly narrowed as her wings beat at a steady pace. The dragon let out a small huff as she looked around at the light blue sky that surrounded her. There wasn't a single cloud to stir the bright landscape, all that was in the air was the occasional bird that fluttered past her, or the wind. It was dreadfully windy, although thankfully Mistyeyes was traveling with the wind, causing her to pick up speed as she went along.

She couldn't trace it backwards, she did not know the feeling's source. It was an odd thing, she realized. Others of the pack had found it so easy to hate the humans, following the others of the Night Furies blindly like they always had. And yet Mistyeyes couldn't bring herself to even watch the scene that played out in front of her, even though she had once been the leader figure. How fast had the others forgotten about her? How fast had they tossed her aside

and looked up to a new dragon? The thought pierced her heart like a thorn, making the dragon huff with anger and sadness.

But she shook herself once more, narrowing her eyes into slits as she focused on what was ahead. The island of Berk was making itself known, getting more defined as Mistyeyes swooped down closer. From where she hovered in the air, she could make out the edge of the island where the village had been planted, wincing slightly as she saw the burned wreckage of the town and houses. She was a Night Fury, the most feared kind of dragon in the world. The type of dragon that raised its head above all things and stood above everything else. And yet Mistyeyes was flinching at the very sight of this destroyed town.

Was it because she saw right through Nightflight? Was it because she was the only one that seemed to see the dragoness's cruelty? But did she just see it out of jealousy? Jealousy that Nightflight got to be the leader and she was pushed back down all the way to the bottom? What if that was all it was? What if she couldn't bring herself to take part in this because of her own wounded spirit? Was that all that was holding her back? Maybe it wasn't anything else at all, maybe she would have enjoyed this if she had always been a regular dragon.

But she swooped down nevertheless, diving down in a graceful arc and landing silently in the grass. She landed on the other side of the village, behind the rim of trees and reeds that lined the village, she flattened herself low to the ground, ears perked as she peered out from her hiding place curiously. The people were milling around the village, upon closer look, Mistyeyes realized that the village looked much better than she had thought. The houses were already started to be repaired, many people shredding off the blackened, burnt wood and replacing it with new slabs.

Mistyeyes started at a loud, high-pitched squeal. Turning her head, the dragon blinked slowly as she saw a smaller-looking human. It was a youngling, a thing no bigger than Mistyeyes's head. The small thing was bouncing up high into the air, other small ones shrieking with joy as they stumbled after her. The Night Fury stiffened as they got closer to her, bunching her muscles to make a break for another hiding spot, who knew what the things would do if they saw her? But she hesitated as she saw something that made her ears perk slightly, interest flashing in her eyes. Behind the running children, a small Terrible Terror was bouncing behind them, puffing up and huffing out sparks playfully.

It was obvious that the thing had no intentions of hurting the children, that much was certain. Mistyeyes looked at the smaller dragon carefully, eyes narrowing to confused slits. One of the girls skidded to a stop, whirling around and bouncing up and down gleefully. Taking off into the air, the Terrible Terror zoomed up and went up to land with a thump on her head, copying her as it started to bounce up and down on the thing's hair.

Instead of screaming, the girl giggled. "Look! Look!" She squealed in utter happiness. "Look what he learned to do!" The others clapped loudly, as if this was what they were trying to get him to do the whole time. If that was the case, they needed to rethink their strategies a little more. The Terrible Terror puffed out its chest proudly, kneading its paws on the girl's head excitedly. The girl

reached up, bringing him off her head and giving him a large kiss. "Very good!" She cooed softly. "You are a very good boy, aren't you? Who's a good boy? Who's a good boy?"

Suddenly, Mistyeyes looked up, eyes growing round as she saw what she had missed earlier. How she could have missed something so obvious, something so incredibly different? Dragons were flying all around the island, all different types and all different sizes and colors. Mistyeyes saw some of them actually helping the humans in reconstructing the village, bringing up supplies and new pieces of wood for the humans to work with. Mistyeyes caught sight of a Nadder standing beside a smallish girl, throwing out needle-sharp talons that stapled into the wood, keeping it in place firmly.

The Night Fury was completely caught off-guard, eyes wide and mouth slightly open as she looked on. She couldn't move, she didn't know where to move. Her paws were rooted in place, ears perked and eyes somewhat awestruck as she looked at the clearing. She had heard Toothless describe the place to her, right before she banished him from the island of the Night Furies. She recalled the words Toothless had spoken of, of an island that had been brought to peace with dragons. An island that was aided by the dragons, an island that completely defied all other rivalries with other dragons. An island that wasâ€¦perfect. At least that was what was going through Mistyeyes's head. The dragon was completely dumbstruck, she couldn't remember how to move.

It was then that the Nadder from before turned away to look back at what looked like to be its owner, or something of that manner, so to speak. But it stiffened as its eyes landed on Mistyeyes, the Night Fury's lack of movement having left her head sticking out of the bush ever so slightly. The catch of the Nadder's gaze made Mistyeyes snap back into reality, ducking back into cover rapidly, heart pounding in her ears as she dug her claws into the ground.

Her eyes widened as she peered through the dense foliage to try and spot the Nadder. For a moment, the dragon didn't do anything but stare at the spot where she had disappeared, as if trying to debate whether or not it had actually seen her or if she was just a figment. Mistyeyes relaxed slightly as she saw the Nadder not moving, slouching slightly as she breathed out a breath she had not realized she had been holding. But then the Nadder started to roar loudly, Mistyeyes jumping nearly out of her skin as heat shot through her.

The Nadder screeched loudly, the village slowing at once in its mending as everybody turned wildly to look at the dragon. The Nadder's thistles went straight up on its lashing tail, it looked like it had gone crazy to say the least. The girl that had been working with the Nadder threw out her hands, trying to calm the raging dragon by muttering out soft words to it, slightly panicked at the same time. But the Nadder shook the girl off, dashing forward and making for the brush that Mistyeyes was being concealed by.

Jumping once more, Mistyeyes lurched into action, spinning around and dashing back deeper into the forest, feet pounding on the ground wildly as she ran forward. Risking a glance backwards, Mistyeyes caught sight of the Nadder rounding the corner and looking into her hiding spot, relaxing instantly as it let out a trill of confusion. Puffing, he whipped her head back around, facing forward now just in

time to swerve past a rock wildly.

The forest flashed past her in a blur, the dragon having no idea where she was going as she flashed through clearing after clearing. The forest all looked the same to her, trees and rocks and bushes. She had always preferred to stay in the cave back at their old home, but ever since Fleetfoot had moved the pack to the small island off the shore from this one, Mistyeyes had slowly grown accustomed to the outside world. Not that she would rather have it than the cave, she would take the cave any day. Land was way too open, the cave was mixed and complex, nobody would have been able to sneak up on her or catch her off guard. Here it was completely different.

Her ears weren't accustomed to so many sounds at once, it was a miracle she could concentrate on one thing at a time. Launching herself out of the way of another rock, Mistyeyes growled under her breath, wondering how many of them there could be in one single place. They seemed to be everywhere as she looked around. Feeling herself slowing down, the dragon skidded to a stop, puffing and huffing as she raised her head to look back over her shoulder.

The coast was clear, nobody had followed her or was in the forest with her. The dragon eyed the dense greenery around her carefully, remembering how the island had looked from above. Trees seemed to fill every single inch of the rest of the island, where was she? How long would it take her to get lost? She would have to wait a while more until she could get up and fly, just in case the Nadder would have been watching the skies for a trace of her.

Sighing loudly to herself, Mistyeyes's ears flattened to her head, the dragon blinking for a moment or two until she shook herself, turning and clambering up to stand on top of a fairly large boulder. She looked hopefully for a sign that the woods were turning into something else, the dragon picturing herself rounding back to the village and finding a new hiding spot for herself. But disappointment filled her as she realized the forest stretched on ahead of her. She didn't remember how many turns she had taken, she didn't remember if it was straight back to the island or not.

The dragoness turned, ready to go back to the dragon island before she was missed, but stopped suddenly, stiffening as she heard a faint noise. Her ears perked, straining through the other sounds of the forest as she picked apart one sound from another. The birds cawing back and forth, the rustling of the leaves around her from the pesky wind that buffeted the landscape, the shifting that squirrels and animals caused. They were all shoved out of her mind as Mistyeyes listened for the tell-tale noise again. It sounded like a human.

Sure enough, the sound came again, a faint sound of laughter coming from up ahead. Blinking, Mistyeyes let her ears relax back to her head, the Night Fury looking back and forth from right and left. One way might have led back to the village, were most of the people and dragons seemed to be. Mistyeyes came to see that what Toothless had once told her had been true, did she not? But the thought brought up another. Where had Toothless been?

She hadn't seen him among the others in the clearing, which was odd. Considering he was the only Night Fury on the island, he should have stood out a little more. The dragon's interest piqued as she thought

back to the day Toothless had left. She had remembered now the little skinny twig that she had made him attack. The thought made her wince slightly, but she pushed it away. Toothless had said the boy had been 'his human', the Vikings had taken the twig with them when they left. Did the twig survive?

Looking back to where the laugh had come from, Mistyeyes pushed herself to her feet, starting forward at a run once more. The winter wind whipped back at her, and Mistyeyes felt a shiver of cold run through her as she ran. A thin layer of snow lied on the ground, her feet leaving behind footprints with a small crunch as she went along. Could humans tell which tracks were which? Blinking rapidly, Mistyeyes slapped her tail down into the snow, letting it droop down to the ground as it covered her footprints. But all it did was leave a long line trailing behind her, which would probably make somebody want to follow her more than just a few dragon tracks in the snow. Growling under her breath, Mistyeyes rolled her eyes, picking her tail back up as she glanced backwards at the tracks she had left behind. Honestly, sometimes she just didn't-

Her thoughts broke off as she smaller into a large rock with a thump, grunting as she made contact with the hard surface. Grimacing, Mistyeyes pushed herself off heavily, staggering as she tried to regain her footing, head spinning as she tried to shake it off. Waiting until her vision got back to normal, Mistyeyes turned and looked at the rock with anger shining in her eyes, narrowed slits as she glared at the boulder. She had half a mind to try and melt it with fire (could rocks be melted?) when she finally noticed where she was, hearing a loud voice from in front of her.

It sounded a lot like the little girl's from before, in the tone, that is. Mistyeyes blinked, shaking her head clear one more time as she looked what was in front of her. It seemed that the land dropped from where she stood, falling away steeply into what looked like a cove. Flattening herself down to the cold snow, Mistyeyes crawled forward carefully, as to not make any noise. Peering over to the rim of the land, the dragoness peered down into the neat clearing, ears perking immediately as she spotted Toothless.

The Night Fury set off a loud alarm of recognition, Mistyeyes blinking as she realized that something was different now. It was true that this was Toothless, there was no doubt about it. The odd golden switch on his tailfin shone up at Mistyeyes, glinting in the morning light as she winced away from the flash. And yet something was entirely different about the dragon. He was happy. The thought stuck Mistyeyes as odd, but the dragon purred softly as she watched Toothless.

The Night Fury was bouncing through the snow like a youngling, throwing up snow with his feet purposefully as it showered back down to the ground in a flurry. The dragon barked loudly, eyes gleaming as he ducked behind a rock, tucking his tail away from sight. Quite unlike Mistyeyes, he seemed more at home out here, clearly finding better use in rocks than that of Mistyeyes, who found only crashing into them worked best. Movement in the left made Mistyeyes turn, surprise going through her as she saw the familiar form of Shadowclaw bounding through the snow after Toothless.

She had almost forgotten about the little dragon, warmth spreading through every inch of her as she watched the little Night Fury roll

around in the snow. Shadowclaw seemed to have found a new friend also, faint recognition going through Mistyeyes as she saw what looked like a fluff ball bouncing next to the Night Fury, loud, high-pitched noises coming from it as she batted Shadowclaw's flank lightly. The dragon seemed to enjoy her company, leaning over and chucking snow into the thing's face with a squeal.

Mistyeyes laughed under her breath, the Night Furies completely different than the ones she had left behind at the island. They looked likeâ€¦what Mistyeyes wished things could be like. Flattening her ears, the dragon glanced backwards, thinking back to the village. Everybody seemed so happy, helping one another workâ€¦completely unaware of the impending attack that Nightflight was planning against them. Thinking back to the day Toothless had left also led her back to what happened right after.

Mistyeyes had been sitting in the cave, planning out the burying ritual with Nightflight when she herself had seen the faintest twitch of life in the dragoness's claws, a small movement that had been just enough. She had been the one to sound everybody's attention, yelling out that Nightflight was still alive. She had been the one to crouch down next to the Night Fury's side, cooing out soft words to her friend. She had been the one to order for more herbs. She had been the one to save Nightflight's lifeâ€¦

She jumped at a loud roar splitting the air. Wildly, she looked back down to the cove, heart pounding. But she relaxed immediately as she saw Toothless leap out of his hiding spot, charging forward. Craning her neck to look around the rock, Mistyeyes blinked as she saw what Toothless was going for. The twig! She shook her head quickly. The boy!

So he was alive then?

The boy was laughing loudly, trying to outrun Toothless vainly. Reaching down, the boy stooped down, reaching out and scooping up some snow rapidly, molding it into a ball and whirling around to launch it forward. The snowball landed right on Toothless's nose, the dragon blinking rapidly as he skidded to a stop with surprise. His eyes were crossed as he looked down at the mush of white stuff on his face, the boy seeming to be doubled over with laughter.

Shaking the stuff from his face, Toothless let out a huff of amusement, crouching to the ground and jumping forward. He tackled the small boy to the ground, Mistyeyes watching as he balanced his weight carefully as to not hurt the child. Toothless wrestled with the boy, the human showing no signs of panic at all as he played with the dragon. The sight sent an unexpected warmth through Mistyeyes, and she found herself edging forward subconsciously.

Shadowclaw and the fluff ball perked at the sight of the play, trilling loudly as they got up and joined in the fight. The fluff ball wasn't doing much, just hopping around on Toothless's back lightly. Shadowclaw seemed to be having the time of his life, wriggling and twisting as he pounced on Toothless. "I'll save you Hiccup!" He cheered loudly.

Hiccup? Mistyeyes blinked, looking down at the boy, who was still laughing. Was that a hiccup? â€¦Was it his NAME?

Suddenly, the fluff ball reared up, landing on Toothless's head with a thump. The dragon huffed loudly, shaking the fluff off of his head lightly. The thing squeaked loudly as it hit the ground, but it just started batting at the dragon's leg. Toothless turned to look down at the ball of fluff, when he stopped mid-look, eyes widening as he finally caught sight of Mistyeyes. The dragon stiffened immediately, eyes growing round as she realized too late that she had been in plain sight after she had moved to get a better view.

She had been so curious about them playing, she hadn't even realized what she had been doing.

A few moments of silence came when Toothless met her eyes, the world seeming to stop as Mistyeyes blinked rapidly. The others that had been playing with Toothless stilled at the lack of movement, confusion showing in their eyes. The boy blinked, seeming confused as he looked up at Toothless. Mistyeyes could see the worry in his eyes where she sat.

Before she could even realize what she was going to do, Mistyeyes jumped down into the cove with a single bound, Toothless tensing as she started to walk forward. "Please, I'm sorry." She tried, wincing as she tried to reason with him. But of course, why would he look in her favor anyway? She had been sitting here like a hawk, watching them. "Let me explain first--"

As soon as she tried to speak, the reaction took place. Toothless let out a loud roar, eyes narrowing as his claws slid out with a gleam. Shadowclaw fell off of him with the shock, eyes widening as he too caught sight of Mistyeyes. The fluff ball wailed loudly from the sudden noise, leaning over and clamping her paws tightly over her ears as she closed her eyes. Before the boy could even try and get up himself, Toothless side-stepped quickly, reaching out and pushing the boy away behind him, the human letting out a muffled sound as Toothless planted himself in front of him protectively.

Shadowclaw stood off to the side, eyes wide with shock as he looked at Mistyeyes. The dragoness knew the youngling remembered her, but she kept her eyes on Toothless, holding her ground as she ducked her head slightly. She did nothing wrong, she wasn't about to let herself fall. "Listen." She hissed through clenched teeth. "If you let me explain--"

"Get out of here!" Toothless roared, wings shooting out as he hid the human behind him protectively. "Get out of here and never come back! If you so much as take one step forward, you'll regret it!" It was obvious that he was looking after the human, his eyes alight with fury as he glared at her. "Stay away from us! Get out of here!" It was amazing his voice didn't reach all the way to the Night Fury island.

Movement from the corner of her eye made Mistyeyes turn. The human had moved, peering around Toothless with wide eyes. Mistyeyes looked down at him, blinking slowly. The human's eyes met her's, wide and confused, and the Night Fury felt her heart melt slightly. She remembered how the human had looked back in the cave, much like this. After seeing how he had been so happy with Toothless before, her heart gave a jerk as if being tugged on a string. She realized something.

She didn't want to see the human hurt again.

Not any human.

Not after what she had seen.

Lifting her chin, she straightened herself, looking at Toothless right in the eyes. "I'm on your side."

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A/N: My sister is kicking me off the computer, so I had to cut it kind of short.

Sorry about that! ^^

Hope you have a good night! And I hope you'll make mine even better by reviewing!

7. Chapter 7

A/N: I cannot stop! I ran smack into the wall of HTTYD obsession for some reason! â€œ|Whenever my baby sister is watching it, instead of deciding I'll sit down and watch it with her, I should know the consequences by now. And crap, I'm so sorry about any typos I have on here. I really am, I don't mean to leave them there. I'll try to be better at it, okay? :)

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For a heartbeat, Toothless went silent, eyes narrowed with suspicion as he refused to budge where he stood. The Night Fury's eyes were still smoldering with anger as he looked into Mistyeyes's eyes, wings still thrown out protectively over the human that was behind him. Mistyeyes held Toothless's gaze and the silence as long as she could, the sound of the wind blowing through the cove around them seeming to echo in her ears. Finally, she drew in a short breath, repeating her words firmly. "I'm on your side." She said clearly. "You have no reason to be afraid of me."

Another pause of silence. But then Toothless straightened, Mistyeyes realizing that the Night Fury was taller than her. Toothless stalked forward a few steps, Mistyeyes gritting her teeth and not moving as he came closer. But Toothless stopped still a ways away from her, staying close to the human just in case. "I don't believe you." He snarled, ears flattening to his head immediately. "Why should I believe you, anyway?" He demanded harshly. The comment made Mistyeyes flinch backwards, as if having been struck.

There was truth in his words, after all. "Because I came here?" She demanded, an edge to her voice as she looked at Toothless fully. The male stopped for a moment, caught off guard by her statement. Before he could say anything else, Mistyeyes continued. "I came here today because of the fact that I knew what the Night Furies were doing was wrong. I came here because I remembered how you spoke of the island of Berk being friends with the dragons around here. I came to see whether or not you were right."

"So you saw." Toothless commented, looking her up and down. "What did that change? You saw the Vikings riding into the cave on dragons before. You saw them fighting on them, what does living with them change? You must think that we're just pets, playthings for the humans and nothing more! If you thought that before, why did you attack us last night?" Mistyeyes started, caught off-guard by the question. For a moment, she floundered, her mouth slightly open as she groped for the right words. Toothless looked at her skeptically, waiting for her to come up with some sort of excuse.

"I only came today." Mistyeyes snapped finally, the best she could think of at a time like this. She had pictured this going so much more smoothly, she had pictured herself telling Toothless all about the planned raid, everything that they could do together to get the humans off of Berk before it happened. But right now, her tongue was tied, she couldn't remember when Nightflight had said the attack would be, if she even did at all. Locking her jaw, Mistyeyes added forcefully. "And anyway, who are you to not believe me about what I say? Couldn't you be the least bit grateful that I came in the first place?"

"I have a hard time believing somebody who comes from the same pack as her." Toothless snarled, Mistyeyes's gaze clearing. He didn't have to add who 'her' was, Mistyeyes already knew more about that than he knew. "Besides." Toothless added roughly. "I remember you too, you aren't the only one who can name others." Mistyeyes blinked as he said this, not having time to interrupt before he could say anything else. "You were the one who made me attack Hiccup in the first place." The dragon's eyes flickered backwards to the human behind him. So Mistyeyes had been right; Hiccup had been the thing's name.

"I made you do nothing." Mistyeyes retorted, titling her head up higher, refusing to be beaten. "I gave you a choice. It was Nightflight who made you do it, she pressured you into your motives. I did nothing but offer you a choice. You could have refused to hurt the human, or you could have stayed with us and attacked. You did what you thought was right back then. But as I remember correctly, you weren't in your right mind back then, either."

Toothless's mouth set in a thin line, slightly puckered in a sour look. Silence followed, and Mistyeyes gave a small laugh, seeming to be slightly out of place in the current situation. "So it seems as though we're both at fault here, hmm?" When Toothless refused to reply, the dragoness's voice took on a much more serious tone, dropping low as she looked into the dragon's eyes. "I know that you might already know this." She murmured softly, scuffling her feet on the snow with a small clumping noise. "About Nightflight still being here. I know it was you that tried to kill her."

Instead of trying to deny it like Mistyeyes had expected, Toothless just bared his teeth once more. "She deserved to die. She still does!" He shouted, his voice growing into a deafening roar as Mistyeyes winced away from the noise. Momentarily forgetting that she was standing in front of him, Toothless sighed heavily, blinking slowly as his eyes strayed down to the ground. "She's still alive then?" Mistyeyes had difficulty deciding whether or not it was supposed to be a question.

She opened her mouth, ready to branch out yet another plead for him to listen to her, still not sure if he remembered her in front of him, when he snapped into motion. The human behind him had tried to go forward, Toothless giving a strangely gentle growl, the human scuttling backwards immediately, his back hitting the rock of the cove with a small thump. Mistyeyes noted that Shadowclaw had not yet spoken, the smaller dragon merely sitting off to the side, eyes expressionless as he looked at Mistyeyes directly.

"You aren't the only one that has been changed by her, anyway!" The dragoness stated, tail lashing back and forth as she did so. "Ever since she's been healed, she's been filling the other dragons' heads with nonsense about killing humans! She took my leadership status, now I'm back at the bottom. If anybody knows how you feel-"

"Don't you DARE make this about yourself!" Toothless snarled, lurching forward slightly as he growled throatily. "Don't make a fuss over loosing something as stupid as a leadership job that didn't even exist and try and compare it to what happened to me, what happened to him, what is happening to everybody!" Mistyeyes jumped, taking a small step back. Toothless looked her up and down, a somewhat disgusted look coming over his face as he sized her up critically. "You're just like the rest of them." He spat. "Conceited, thoughtless, and horrible."

"Are you saying all Night Furies are like that?" Mistyeyes asked softly, tilting her head to the side.

"Of course!" Toothless blustered. "You all see the thing right in front of you and never try to dig down deeper! You don't see the facts, you just do what the other says." He paused, blinking rapidly before he added bitterly. "I used to think Night Furies were the best dragon breeds out there, like what all the humans say. But now I know that you're all just blind. There's nothing I can do for you, and there's nothing you can say to make me change my mind. Just leave."

Toothless started to turn to leave, but Mistyeyes cut him short. "If all Night Furies are that way, what makes you the exception?" She asked simply. Toothless turned slightly, looking at her as if he were confused. "You know." Mistyeyes quipped. "You said that every other Night Furies were simple-minded creatures. You never said yourself along with that bunch. So, it leads me to ask what makes you so different from all the other dragons out there, hmm?"

"I was taught differently." Toothless said harshly, eyes narrowing coldly. "I was taught different by Hiccup and all the other humans on this island. Things that I never considered before. Hiccup taught me there was more to life than coming out first. He taught me more things than the other Night Furies ever did. That's why he's so important to me. And that's why you will never understand anything."

"Maybe I want to." Mistyeyes said firmly. "Did you ever think that maybe I came here for the same reason you did? I was curious. I was curious about the way you talked about the humans and the way that you were so loyal to them. You're right, Toothless. I am selfish, I am conceited. Whether or not any other dragon is is out of my knowledge. But I know see that you were right. When the human came to us before, I did not hesitate to give the order to kill it. Because

it was what the others wanted, it was what I thought they needed.

"Now I see differently. And all it took was me sinking to the bottom of the others in order for me to truly know. So yes, I am selfish and conceited, if that is what you want to call it. But you forgot one important detail, Toothless. Something that you overlooked that doesn't make me as what you think."

Toothless glared at her. "What is that?" He snapped grouchyly.

Mistyeyes tilted her head up. "I came here." She stated. "The others are plotting something, Toothless. I came here to tell you what is going to happen so that nothing bad will come to this island. If you don't believe me, that's your own fault. You're the only one that would listen to me, I thought. If you don't want to hear what I have to say, then I'll just leave. The pack will be missing me by now." With that she whipped around, fuming angrily as she started to stomp away.

"W-Wait!" Mistyeyes huffed angrily at the yell, ears going back to flatten against her head. Stomping her foot down on the ground with a thump, Mistyeyes spun back around, tail lashing in aggravation. "You know what, I don't even think that I'll-" She broke off, eyes widening with surprise. Toothless was sitting rigid, tense and stiff as he looked at the scene carefully. It had not been the Night Fury to object to her leaving.

The human had rushed up to her, skidding to a clumsy stop in front of her, spraying snow up into the air with a small whooshing sound. Grimacing away from the frosty flakes, the Night Fury eyed the smaller thing strangely, looking it up and down. He didn't look like a danger to anybody, let alone somebody as powerful as Nightflight. Why was the dragoness so bent on destroying this small thing? He was too little to do any real damage, not to mention too skinny.

And why had he wanted her to stay? Mistyeyes let out a small, curious purr, large eyes somewhat soft as she looked at the thing in front of her. What was it that Toothless had called it? Hiccup? Yes, that was it. His name was Hiccup. Giving a small glance over at Toothless, Mistyeyes shuffled her paws on the ground, not exactly sure what to do now. The child was staring at her almost expectantly, she had no idea what to do by this point in time. Rumbling uncomfortably, she started to scoot backwards, the act almost a bad habit with dragons and humans.

Toothless started to move towards the boy, just as carefully as Mistyeyes was moving away. The Night Fury made a move to get up, opening his mouth as if to call out to the smaller boy. But he was interrupted by Shadowclaw, the youngling speaking up for once as he narrowed his eyes crossly at Toothless. "You have to give her a chance!" He yelled angrily, Toothless jumping with surprise. "We're never going to get anywhere with you being like that!" The fluff ball let out a shrill noise beside him.

The boy looked at her carefully for a moment more, eyes slightly glazed over as he stared at her. For a wild moment, Mistyeyes thought that he remembered her as the dragon to demand Toothless to kill him. But she pushed the thought away stubbornly, grinding her teeth

together tightly. The thought was ridiculous, humans couldn't understand dragons, for one. He wouldn't know that she was the one who had spoken first! It wasn't possible, so she was fine. Fine being sitting immobile in the snow not being able to move for some reason. It felt like she had been sitting her for ages, why couldn't the human just-

The dragon blinked, thoughts being blown away as she narrowed her eyes thoughtfully. The boy's hand was twitching at his side, the human suddenly seeming to be nervous as he looked up at her. Blowing out a huge breath of air, the human shuffled his feet on the ground for a moment or two, hand going up rather reluctantly. From behind him, Toothless's ears flattened to his head, the dragon bracing itself to race forward just in case. But Mistyeyes only looked at the boy oddly, watching as his hand stopped an inch away from her face.

Wellâ€¦what was she supposed to do? Eyes flickering back over to Toothless, Mistyeyes bit back the question, forcing herself not to look back over at Shadowclaw for support either. Squaring herself, she looked back at the human reminding herself of what had happened back in the cave. It was partially her fault that it had happened, she could be blamed for the act also. Guilt rushed through her as she looked at the human now, the feeling having stayed inside her head ever since she had seen Toothless and the human together in the snow. Something like that would have been a disgrace to the other members of her family if they had seen that now. It probably would have been that way for them even before Nightflight got inside their heads. But it was different for her. It seemedâ€¦niceâ€¦fun.

Something she almost didn't remember after being with Nightflight.

And now the human was waiting for her. He was giving her a choice. Blinking slowly, Mistyeyes let out a small huff, tilting her head to the side thoughtfully. Did he want her to copy him? She could do thatâ€¦right? Looking down at the ground, she stuck her tongue out with concentration, bringing up one paw (A/N: that's the right word, right? XD) and reaching up to press it against the human's hand softly. Puffing out her chest proudly, she gave a nod of affirmation, quite proud of herself.

Looking over at her, the human's face was blank for a moment or two, looking slightly lost as he looked from her to her paw. Then he did a strange thing with his mouth, the edges curling upwards, a small laugh bubbling up from his throat. Slightly put out, Mistyeyes drew her paw back, looking over at Shadowclaw quizzically. "Did I do it right?" She asked, confused.

But Shadowclaw was too busy laughing to reply.

Shaking herself, she turned over to Toothless, giving him a look. "So the human trusts me before the dragon?" She demanded angrily. The Night Fury only looked at her sourly. "Somehow that doesn't seem quite right. Are you going to listen to what I have to say now, or are you going to ignore me still? Don't you trustâ€¦" She looked over at the human. "â€¦Hiccupâ€¦?" She tried out the name lamely.

"Of course I trust him." Toothless stated. "It's you I don't trust."

"Old grudges die hard." Mistyeyes pointed out. Toothless's only reply was a snort, the dragon getting up and going over to stand behind Hiccup. Something flashed in his eyes as he looked at her, the dragoness's eyes boring into his own. "If you don't listen to what I have to say now, you're going to be in deeper trouble than I thought. If you had half the sense that this human does-"

"Now you're calling him stupid!" Toothless asked loudly, hackles raising at once.

"Of course not! I'm only saying that you might want to think about something other than your pride before you go around disapproving help! I came all the way out here to tell you something that could really be beneficial to you!"

"Well then you might as well just leave." Toothless snarled, baring his teeth. "You banned me from YOUR island. Well, now you're banned from mine. Don't ever come back here, the other dragons know what you did too." Mistyeyes fleetingly remembered the angry Nadder, locking her jaw angrily at the memory. She was sitting upright, refusing to show the way she was crumpling inside. Shadowclaw wasn't helping her anymore, the child's head slightly ducked as he shied away. The human looked from one dragon to another, biting his lower lip anxiously as his hands wringing together nervously.

That was it. Mistyeyes had it. Glaring sharply at Toothless, the dragoness unfolded her wings, eyes still fixed on the Night Fury crossly. "Fine, then." She snapped tartly. "It's your choice whether you listen to me or not. I was just trying to help." Pausing for a moment, she turned her gaze back up into the sky angrily. "When it happens, don't you dare make it all about yourself." She snapped, using the dragon's own word against him as she shot into the air.

[illegible]

Landing with a thump, Mistyeyes shook her head clear, blinking as she looked at the expanse of land in front of her. There were only a few Night Furies scudded around the clearing, some resting lazily, and others mulling about. Mistyeyes caught sight of two children play-wrestling together, a pang going through her as an adult came over and whisked away one of the two with a shove. Ears flattening, Mistyeyes realized they were building better dens in case it rained or snowed, which was two things that happened here a lot it seemed.

The child that had been broken up from the play-fight grumbled angrily as he was put to work, grumpily scooping up sticks and stones and trotting after the larger Night Fury without a passing glance back at his friend. Mistyeyes let out a small sigh, figuring that she had better get to work before-

"I've been waiting to see when you would show up." The dragon started with surprise, spinning around as tensing as Nightflight looked at her strangely. The dragoness was sitting neatly on the edge of the island, Mistyeyes had no idea how she would have not caught sight of the female. Nevertheless, Nightflight had indeed been waiting for her, the thought putting a lump in her throat that she desperately

tried to swallow back.

"And just where have you been, hmm?" Nightflight mused, looking at Mistyeyes expectantly. The female did not dare to reply. After waiting a moment, Nightflight went on ahead. "I haven't seen you since morning, you MUST have been off doing something quite important to have been gone that long. Where were you exactly, Mistyeyes?" Her voice dripped with anger as she glared at the Night Fury in front of her.

"Hunting." The lame excuse found its way out before Mistyeyes could try and stop it.

"Oh? Where's your prey?"

"There was nothing out there." Mistyeyes fumbled.

"Why didn't you ask for others to come with you? I'm sure a larger hunting party would have been more sufficient, right? Or was it because you actually weren't hunting?" Nightflight's eyes narrowed dangerously, Mistyeyes fight the urge to shy away from the probing look that the dragon gave her.

"Don't be ridiculous." Mistyeyes said, forcing her voice to remain calm and steady. "I woke up before the sun rose, I didn't want to wake anybody. Next time I go out, I'll take the liberty of waking the whole island and you as well. Would you prefer that one, Nightflight?"

Nightflight scowled, eyes narrowing angrily as she looked Mistyeyes up and down. "I know where you went." She growled, catching Mistyeyes off-guard. "I saw you leave, I've been here ever since." But suddenly, she gave a small laugh, eyes twinkling with some kind of humor. "But I suppose that since you came back, your plan didn't work, whatever the fool idea was." Snapping back into motion, Nightflight walked forward and pushed her face into Mistyeyes, nose to nose with the female. "Don't take me for a fool, Mistyeyes." She snarled, the smaller dragon wincing away from her words. "I never did like you, and now I know why. I'm going to be watching you closely from now on, Mistyeyes. Mark my words. You'd better straighten out, or else I might slip."

Mistyeyes gulped, Nightflight turning and stalking away, not even glancing back at Mistyeyes. The dragon let out a small shiver as she grimaced, ducking her head away. If Nightflight could clearly threaten somebody of her own family, what could she do to people she did even know? If she did anything. How could Mistyeyes not have known what Nightflight was capable of for so long? It looked like it should have been clear as day by now.

Locking her jaw, Mistyeyes let her eyes scan across the clearing of the island. The small island that the Night Furies were crowing in on. She looked at the small youngling working alongside the adults, fluttering up on its small little wings in order to get three feet off of the ground. It was barbaric. The youngling should have been left to play with its friend, it should be in the nursery right now. Not out in the middle of nowhere.

Whether or not anybody acknowledged her, Mistyeyes was the only true leader of this pack. Despite everything else that had happened

she still didn't want to leave. But then she shook herself, giving yet another growl as she pushed herself off the ground, soaring into the air gracefully, without hesitation.

Hiccup didn't move, still sitting in the snow. He watched her shape get smaller and smaller until she disappeared completely, leaving the four behind and alone once more. For a moment, nothing made a sound except for the faint howling of the wind through the rocks of the cove, buffeting the sparse trails of lichen still clinging to the walls. But Hiccup let out a small grumble, pushing himself up to his feet and dusting the snow off of his snow with a fixed look. He didn't look at Toothless, not at Ludi, and not at Shadowclaw, though he could tell that they were all looking at him, waiting for him to say something.

Letting his hands drop to his sides, Hiccup blew out a low sigh, his bangs fluttering up into the air from the small blast. Finally he looked over at Toothless, blinking slowly as he stared at the Night Fury. Large green eyes stared back at him, round and worried as they looked back at him. Frowning, Hiccup huffed once more. "I guess." He mumbled, not exactly sure what he was replying to. Toothless's wings fluttered slightly, the dragon tilting his head to the side as he looked at the smaller human. Glancing back up at the sky, Hiccup scuffed the ground with the tip of his boot softly. "I know that making friends with recent people haven't worked out a lotâ€¦butâ€¦" He trailed off for a moment, blinking rapidly before he finished the sentence. "â€¦she seemed sort of different."

He looked over at Toothless, but the Night Fury did not meet his gaze.

[illegible]

"I still don't see why you did any of that." Shadowclaw said stubbornly, glaring over at Toothless angrily. What the youngling didn't make in size, he made up for his brains. The young dragon was smarter than most, something that wasn't working in Toothless's favor right now. The two dragons were sitting out in front of Hiccup's house, the boy having gone in a rush to the Blacksmith's saying he would be back. Twilight settled over the island, and a cold nip started to make itself known. But Shadowclaw paid no heed to any of it. "It was idiotic!"

"The last time I met another Night Fury was Nightflight, and you saw how well that went." Toothless snapped, glancing over at Shadowclaw shortly. "Mistyeyes had nothing to tell us, she was just saying that."

"And you know that for sure?" Shadowclaw demanded, refusing to be outdone. "You don't know that, right? She said that she had something IMPORTANT to tell us, Toothless. It could have actually been something we needed to know. And now we'll never find out what it is." The youngling glared down at the ground angrily. "You can't let what happened with Nightflight affect your judgment, otherwise you'll be messing up a lot of other things."

"I didn't ask for your opinion." Toothless said gently, trying not to let himself get angry. "I'm just not risking anything as of right now. It wouldn't be wise to go making friends with people like that."

She was with the other Night Furies, and they attacked us, remember? Think about it: why would she be the only Night Fury to feel guilt after something like that? It's obvious she's WITH them."

"You didn't listen to my opinion back in the cove, either." Shadowclaw grumbled bad-temperedly. "If you just listened to me, maybe we could have seen which one of us is right. Since we don't know where the others are staying, we can't find her now. Hiccup was right, she did seem different. She seemed likeâ€¦she seemed a bit like you, actually." Shadowclaw turned and gave Toothless a smile, a trick that Toothless had taught him after he came here to the island. "Yeahâ€¦that's who she reminded me of! You!"

Toothless scowled, not amused by the comparison. "I'm nothing like her." He snapped.

"Sure you are, Toothless." Shadowclaw quipped happily. "And maybe that's why you don't want her to be here. After all, that's the only reason I can think of for you. It's not like you're giving me anything to work with, right?" His voice became a little more bitter as he ended ungracefully, looking at the older male sourly. Toothless looked down at him, a hint of amusement playing in his eyes as he gave a small smile to the littler dragon.

"If you think that, you must not know me at all." He yawned loudly, fidgeting as he craned his neck to look back and forth. What was Hiccup doing, and why was it taking him so long? "Anyway, it's just like you said, there's no finding her after this, we might as well just drop the subject." At this, he gave Shadowclaw a look that clearly enforced his statement, the youngling giving a heavy sigh as he looked away dejectedly, cheeks slightly puffed out.

Sighing through his nose, Toothless turned and looked in the direction of the Blacksmith's stall, wondering dimly what Hiccup forgot to do and what was giving him so much trouble. He shuffled his feet on the frostbitten grass, wincing slightly. Maybe there was some truth in Shadowclaw's wordsâ€¦maybe he was only thinking of himself. That is, he was letting Nightflight cloud his judgment. But the dragoness clung in his memories like a black shadow, he couldn't shake her off, no matter how much he tried. He couldn't stop thinking about her for some reason, he couldn't stop wondering what would have happened ifâ€¦

He shook his head rapidly, growling under his breath. He wouldn't think about that, he had no reason to. And yetâ€¦he couldn't help remembering how it used to be with her, how they would wake up every morning together. When they were little kids, they used to play all day, when they got older they hunted and flew together. Nightflight always seemed like the perfect Night Fury, she always seemed like somebody he would stick with forever. How did she change so much so fast? What had made her become what she was now? By what Mistyeyes said, she was still creating trouble where she was.

But that fact aside. How was she even alive? Toothless's eyes narrowed slightly as the thought came to mind, claw digging into the ground angrily. He had killed her, he was sure of it. Shadowclaw helped him, sort of. As young as the Night Fury was, even he had seen what Nightflight had become. Had the others not believed Toothless when he told them her tale? Surely that had been the case, otherwise she wouldn't be the new 'leader' for them.

So what was she up to? Toothless lifted his gaze up to the sky, but disappointment filled him as he saw nothing. As if there would have been anything up there in the first place. Remembering the fright of finding Hiccup falling off of him, the wide ghost eyes that looked up at him as his human plummeted to the ground. He shivered at the thought, grinding his teeth together tightly. He wouldn't think about it. He wouldn't think about it. It was something that wouldn't happen again, he would make sure of it.

"So what are we going to do now?" Shadowclaw spoke up, Toothless jumping at the youngling's voice. Looking down at the Night Fury, Toothless tried to look optimistic, pushing down whatever thoughts had been swimming around in his mind. Shadowclaw turned and met his gaze, eyes looking skeptic. "I can see past that, you know." He snapped irritably, amusement thinly layered on his voice as he smiled slightly. Toothless's ears flattened against his head at once. The smaller dragon stood, ears flicking. "And if I can see it, Hiccup can probably so the same."

Before Toothless could reply, Shadowclaw turned and bounded away, towards the direction of the Blacksmith's stall, his tail fanning out behind him. Toothless watched him go, a frown creased on his face as he watched. "Maybe." He said to the empty space, wings giving an anxious flutter behind him. Turning, Toothless blinked once as he caught sight of Astrid. The girl was heading back to her own house, Stormfly walking right beside her. The girl had her palm pressed against the dragon's cheek affectionately, the two walking side by side together.

When had Hiccup and him grown so far apart-

"Buddy!" Hiccup's voice started him back to reality, turning around and catching sight of the boy as he skidded to an ungraceful stop in front of him. "Sorry, Gobber got me doing a whole bunch of other stuff, I have no idea how I ended up doing all that stuff." Toothless snorted with amusement: 'It's because you're so much of a pushover.' He thought. But Hiccup seemed to get the message, face turning sour as he smiled at the same time. "Whatever." He puffed, sticking his tongue out at the dragon before he said with a clap of his hands. "Anyway, let's go inside, it's freezing out here."

Hiccup turned, making his way to the steps leading up to the house. Toothless let out a purr, hopping forward and pushing his head against his human's side, closing his eyes as he did so. Hiccup let out a surprise noise, blinking rapidly as he looked down at Toothless. He opened his mouth to speak, but snapped it shut, as if thinking better about it. Smiling, Hiccup leaned over and wrapped his arms around Toothless's head, hugging him tightly. "I missed you too." He said happily, pulling back and looking down at Toothless with his signature grin.

Toothless wished that he could have talked to Hiccup. To have him understand him. He wished that he could apologize for any pain that he had made Hiccup go through, small and huge. He wished that he could hear Hiccup forgive him vocally, he wished that he could tell Hiccup that he deserved better than him. He wished that he could tell Hiccup the real reason he kept the tail instead of demanding for the manual one like he did last time.

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"The sooner we attack, the better!" Nightflight declared. "While the humans are recreating their homes and buildings." Looking back and forth decisively, Nightflight revised her sentence before. "We need to make a battle strategy, it doesn't make sense to just rush in there without a plan. We should attack rapidly. We need to fire first and then wait an hour, wait until the humans are absorbed in their work. And then we should strike again. We should repeat the process until every last one of them is gone. We are going to bring back the glory days of the dragons! The time of humans should be no more!"

From the back of the crowd, Mistyeyes shrank back, ears flattening down to her head. Her paws shuffled in the ground, and her back was arched away, trying to get away from the scene as far as possible. The water of the ocean blocked her from scooting back any farther, her sense of justice not allowing her to fly away from the scene in front of her. She could only sit back and watch the plans unfold, and hopefully she could do something about it.

"Mistyeyes." The dragon jumped clear out of her scales as she heard

her name being called, the dragoness whipping her head up and looking for the dragon that had called her name. The whole crowd was looking back at her, wide eyes reflecting her own image inside them as she blinked rapidly. "Do you agree?" It was Nightflight. "After all, I would want the approval of the so VERY important leader." Nightflight's words dripped with sarcasm at the last words, Mistyeyes stiffening at the words.

Laughter rippled through the crowd like a tide, sneers and mocking looks thrown back at her along with the muffled giggles. Mistyeyes's ears slicked back to her head, a sour look overcoming her as her lower lip puckered out hotly. Her eyes narrowed slightly, and she had to dig her claws into the ground to keep herself from jumping to her feet. Nightflight snickered softly, tilting her head to the side. "What's the matter?" She asked innocently. "Can't stand to bear the sight of human blood?" Eyes becoming more serious, Nightflight's tone flattened. "Answer me."

"O-Of course not." Mistyeyes said carefully, wincing inwardly. "How can you afford to doubt one of your own at a time like this? After all, you are the leader." She shot some of her own sarcasm at the end, looking up at Nightflight sweetly. "Anybody else you would want to question?" Gasps rose around her as she spoke the last part. It was as if she had said a curse, she thought, with a roll of her eyes.

Nightflight glared down at her, gathering under herself and springing down to the ground with a thump. The dragons in the crowd shuffled backwards, creating a path for her as she marched down the row in between them. Her ears were slick against her head, and her feet stomped on the ground as she walked. Mistyeyes blinked rapidly, shrinking back ever so slightly as Nightflight came to a stop in front of her. The Night Fury seemed angered for a moment, ready to lash out in front of all the other dragons. But then her face relaxed somewhat, a slow smile spreading over her face as she looked at Mistyeyes oddly. The dragon swallowed uncomfortably.

"Then you wont mind leading the attack? Right alongside me and Fleetfoot?"

[illegible]

A/N: My sister is being mean for no reason and literally screaming at me to get off the computer. So I have to leave. I'm really sorry if there are spelling errors, I did my best to go sort of slow. So anywayâ€¦blame my sister ^^

9. Chapter 9

A/N: So I'm going to tell you all this in case I don't update again. From this Sunday to€some other day (Derp face) I will not be here. I am going to FLORIDA! Disney World! :D So I'm sorry, but I shall be too busy being the mature woman I am, bouncing up and down and singing It's a Small World at the top of my lungs to annoy the random people walking past me. :3

And I'm pretty sure I'm going to ASTL dressed up like Hiccup! Is anybody else going to Anime Saint Louis! :O I would love to meet

youâ€™ ; ^ ;

ANYWHO |this chapter will be awesome. I shall make it so! *mark my words*

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Stealthy shapes slunk through the foliage that surrounded the village, eyes gleaming in the moonlight, unsheathed claws glinting evilly in the cold light. No sound was made, it was deathly silent in the clearing, a tense manner hanging over the party of dragons. They were completely motionless, eyes raised up to the sky where the other party of dragons were flying. They waited for the signal from Nightflight, the signal that would put everything into action. Everything they had been preparing for up until this point in time.

Excitement wriggled through the dragons crouched together, a sick form of excitement that a child would feel before a treat. Their minds were clouded, they weren't thinking straight at all. Paws kneaded the ground impatiently, tails lashed softly with agitation, giving the bushes overhead a slight rustle. But every noise was amplified in the darkness, the dragons immediately shushing one another fiercely. It wouldn't take long, it wouldn't take long at all, surely. Nightflight was the leader, she was in the air. She would know what to do. She would know when to give the signal. All they had to do was listen for it.

Mistyeyes winced slightly, wings beating swiftly in the air as she hovered expertly. Her large blue eyes were fixed on the small-looking island of Berk, a lump in her throat that refused to budge away. Nightflight and Fleetfoot flanked her side-by-side, the dragoness's head lowered somewhat with something in between sadness and defeat. She had nothing she could do by now, there was nothing she could do to stop what was going on in front of her own eyes.

But she was not to be blamed, she told herself stubbornly. She had tried to tell Toothless, to warn him of the danger that was hanging over all of their heads. But he had refused to listen, he had shooed her away, telling her that she was selfish and conceited while she was trying to help him. It made no sense. The dragon's ears slicked back to her head stubbornly, eyes narrowing slowly. Whatever happened here, Toothless brought it on himself, really. He would see how right she was, and then he would listen to her next time.

If there was a next time, of course. Mistyeyes glanced over at Nightflight carefully, the lump in her throat only growing bigger. It seemed like the Night Fury was always watching her by now, she wasn't even trying to hide it anymore. Those green eyes were always trained on her intently, watching and calculating her every move. Mistyeyes was faintly surprised that Nightflight hadn't confined her to one space for the time remaining until the attack. It would have saved a lot of time and effort, frankly. Mistyeyes would have enjoyed being taken off of the attack force also. But that ship had sailed.

Even the younglings were here. The thought making Mistyeyes's stomach churn. They shouldn't be here, and yet Nightflight had promised them they could go. They were down there already, wriggling with anticipation like every other dragon, no doubt. She seemed to be the

only dragon with a sullen frown on her face. It was taking every fiber in her being not to rush away at this point anyway. She was doing good so far.

Nightflight spoke up, sliding her gaze over to Mistyeyes as she blinked slowly. The dragoness started out of her thoughts, blinking rapidly as she turned to meet Nightflight's gaze head-on with what she hoped was a determined glare. The leader only seemed amused though, a hint of laughter in her voice as she started to speak. "Are you going to give it?" She asked lightly, raising an eye at the smaller dragon humorously. Blinking once more, Mistyeyes turned and looked back at the other flying dragons behind her, staring expectantly back at her.

"Give what?" She asked quizzically, turning back to Nightflight with a puzzled expression. She had thought that she was at the head with Nightflight just so that the female could watch her closely. The fact that the fire and smoke following would block her from view not seeming to cross Nightflight's mind apparently. But had she been wrong? Was she up here for an actual REASON? If so, she had never been told otherwise.

"Give the signal." Nightflight purred, Mistyeyes starting slightly with surprise. "Of course, if you don't want to give the signal, I'll do it for you. I just thought this would be a honor for somebody of yourâ€¦status." Twitching at the word, Mistyeyes tried not to glare at Nightflight, the action taking more effort than Mistyeyes had expected in the first place. Nevertheless, Mistyeyes glanced down at the small island underneath her, gulping down the lump finally.

Was this another test? Did she even care? Looking back at Nightflight, Mistyeyes immediately flared up, gritting her teeth together angrily as she saw the contempt in the Night Fury's eyes. Anger got the best of the Night Fury, the dragoness shooting the other female an angered look. "Fine, I will!" She snarled fiercely, Nightflight blinking with slight surprise. Whipping back around, Mistyeyes looked down at Berk for what seemed like the umpteenth time. A moment passed, long and hard as she looked down at the clearing that housed all of the wonderful humans she had seen before.

Hardening her gaze, she turned back around to the others, putting her back to the island stubbornly. Lifting her head to the sky, she inhaled sharply, raising her voice to travel across the sky as she let out a loud roar that split the air. The others instantly leaped into action, roars and blasts of fire exploding all around Mistyeyes as she remained still in the air, wide eyes fixed on the stars that were slowly being blocked by smoke.

What had she just doneâ€”

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It was the loud blast that snapped Hiccup awake. The boy let out a sleep-muffled yell, jerking up and falling out of his bed with a slam. Ludi jumped from the sharp movement, letting out a high-pitched mewl as she looked around in puzzlement for Hiccup. Toothless was on his feet in an instant, dashing over to Hiccup's side and nudging him up to his feet rapidly. Shadowclaw lifted his head, ears erect as his

wide eyes flickered over to the door. Toothless caught where the smaller Night Fury was looking, whipping around and barking out something sharply to the younger dragon.

But Shadowclaw didn't listen apparently. Hiccup watched as the youngling jumped up, turning tail and racing out of the door, rapid thumps signaling him going down the steps as fast as he could. The boy opened his mouth to say something, but jumped once more as another large blast shook the house. Shouting and yelling seeped through the house's walls, Hiccup's eyes widening as he heard the muffled shrieks. Turning around, Hiccup grabbed his prosthetic leg in a rush, strapping it on with a slight wince. Pushing himself up, the boy turned and looking out his bedroom door curiously.

Ludi's fur was fluffed up in fright, the cat's eyes flashing in the gloom of the darkness. Disheveled, Hiccup turned and scooped her up awkwardly, holding her by the stomach as he pushed her close to his chest. Ludi yowled loudly in discomfort, but Hiccup ignored her roughly, feeling heat already soaking through the thin wood walls of his house. "Buddy, we gotta get out of here!" He yelled loudly, turning back and looking at Toothless with a panicked look. The Night Fury gave a tense nod, flanking Hiccup closely as the two pushed their way out of the house.

Stumbling down the stairs, Hiccup felt his way for the door while still holding on to Ludi at the same time, not being able to see much in the darkness. The sun probably wasn't even up, Hiccup was even more all-over-the-place than usual, he could feel the bags weighing down on his eyes. Something terrible must be happening right now, it wasn't every Viking's main priority to get up before the crack of dawn and run aroundâ€screaming. Yeah, something was defiantly going on.

Exploding out into the open air, Hiccup was met with a blast of heat, the teen staggering slightly in surprise. He straightened himself, righting his grip on Ludi as he turned a full circle. "Oh Godsâ€" He whispered emptily, despair welling up over him as he looked at the scene in front of him. "Not again." The entire village was on fire, blazing up and catching fire from one building to the next quicker than Hiccup could watch. Vikings rushed past one another, shoving and pushing to get water in vain hopes of putting out the fires.

The village had just rebuilt itself after the last attack, how could there be another one? Hiccup's breath came in rapid gasps, the smoke hanging in the air burning his throat as he breathed it in. Looking around in horror, Hiccup's mouth hung slack, the boy not knowing what to do as he stood in the middle of the burning scene. He was about to take a step forward to find Astrid, when suddenly a large blast zoomed past, nearly hitting both him, Ludi, and Toothless as it swept past. Tumbling over from shock, Hiccup landed on the ground with a scorching heat burning into his back. Gasping loudly, his grip on Ludi slackened, the cat letting out a wail and shooting off to the side.

Pushing himself up, Hiccup let out a yell, scrambling up to his feet and dashing after Ludi. The cat was racing through the smoke blindly, feet pounding on the ground and her tail streaming out behind her as she raced away. Stumbling after her, Hiccup felt himself crash into other Vikings, the smoke so bad he couldn't make out their faces. He could barley see Ludi, her silver coat the only way he could make out

her shape. But her fur was slowly gathering with soot, Hiccup had to catch her before he couldn't see her at all. Breaking out into a sprint -not easy to do with a fake leg- Hiccup leapt off of the ground, shooting through the air and landing square on top of Ludi.

The cat let out a muffled yelp as he landed on her, but his arms locked around her middle tightly, Hiccup rolling over to the side and clinging to her as hard as he could. He panted dryly, eyes wide as his chest burned from the smoke. "Don't ever do that again!" He gasped sharply, still trying to get his breathing under control as he spoke in a rush. Ludi squirmed slightly in his tip grip, but Hiccup held on stubbornly. He wouldn't lose her again.

Loose her! Hiccup's eyes widened. Sitting bolt upright, he looked around quickly, the smoke blocking his view of everything it seemed. "Toothless?" He called out loudly, voice going slightly hoarse. There was no answer. "Oh Gods!" He had lost Toothless in his hurry to get Ludi back! Heart hammering against his chest hard, Hiccup got to his feet, spinning around in a tight circle as he tried to scan the area around him as best he could. "Hello!" He called out anxiously. "Is anybody there?" No answer.

Stomping his foot down on the ground angrily, Hiccup grew quiet, holding Ludi with an iron grip as he held her close like a stuffed animal. The cat had long since decided that she would stop squirming, she knew that there wasn't any hope for getting out by now. Straining to listen for the yells and shouts that had surrounded him in the village. For all he knew, he could be standing on the very edge of the island right now. But then he would hear the roar of the waves.

The shouts and orders were being called somewhere to the left. It was fainter than before for sure, but it wasn't that far! hopefully. Starting forward carefully, Hiccup tripped over a rock, letting out a yell as he face-planted into the ground with a thump, Ludi mewling softly as she slammed into the ground. Raising his head, Hiccup winced. "Right! so I'm in the forest." He muttered angrily, getting up to his feet and brushing off dirt carefully. "Why does everything bad happen to me, huh?" He looked down at Ludi, as if she could answer him. Her gaze that she returned basically said: 'Because you deserve it.'

"Maybe." He grumbled glaring sourly at her as he started to stomp in what he hoped was the right direction. "TOOTHLESS!" He screamed loudly, closing his mouth and stopping in his tracks to glower in the direction he was going. Nothing came. "TOOTHLESS!" He yelled loudly, stomping his foot down on the ground once more. "Ugh." His voice was nearly gone, and his head was spinning from the smoke. Leaning over and coughing dryly, Hiccup started up once more, adjusting Ludi so that she would be more comfortable. "Sorry." He mumbled to her ungraciously. The cat turned away angrily. It wasn't a very good start to the day, to say the least.

The farther he went, the clearer the air became. Hiccup noticed this after a while of walking, stopping in his tracks for the second time and looking at the air in front of him with the angriest face that he ever had before. This was bad, he didn't know where he was, and he didn't know what was going on. He didn't know where the others were, and he didn't know how fast it took a dragon to kill somebody.

Spinning around, Hiccup retraced his steps, breaking into another fast run as he tore backwards in a panic.

Ludi was being jostled around, the cat's head lolling slightly where she was being held. "Come on, Ludi." He breathed out roughly. "You're fine, you can last a little longer, right?" He looked down at Ludi anxiously, the cat seeming to ignore him. Grumbling under his breath, Hiccup skidded to a stop, looking from Ludi and the direction of where he suspected the village to be. "You'll be fine." Hiccup stated firmly, spinning back around and running backwards, which had originally been his forward. His brain was buzzing from confusion by now.

He ran and ran and ran. He ran until the air thinned out, until it was little colder than before. Until he could breathe easier. Panting heavily, Hiccup crouched on the ground, gulping in the fresher air as he reached over and put Ludi down on the ground. The cat was covered with soot and ash, her fur stinking of smoke and fire. Hiccup probably looked the same to her. Giving another cough, Hiccup smoothed out her fur uselessly, giving her a small smile. "You'll be better here." He promised, the cat looked at her human through bleary eyes. A pang went through Hiccup's heart as he worried about her, but he pushed it away. In the fresh air, she would be getting better by the minute. Should he stay with her?

Looking back around him, Hiccup recognized where he was, giving a nod of affirmation. "I'll come back for you when this is all over." He said sweetly, reaching over and rubbing her head affectionately, soot rubbing off on his head as he did so. The cat blinked up at him, probably not understanding what he was saying. Sighing through his nose, Hiccup figured that she would know the way back to the house by now. If not, he would come back out and search for her.

But right now, he had to be helping his village.

Spinning around, Hiccup gulped in a few more deep breaths of clean air before he started running again. Pounding on the ground, the teen quickly left Ludi behind in the brush she was lying in, heading back to the village as fast as he could. He would get there and find Toothless and help put out the fire. The air slowly got more and more foggy, and Hiccup searched vainly for the orange glow of the fire that would mark where the village was. Unless everything was already over and they put out the fire. But then the smoke would have been cleared outâ€¦

A scream sounded in front of him, faint and yet it was as clear as day. Hiccup stumbled to a halt, eyes widening as his heart rammed against his chest. More and more screams followed, dragon howls of pain and battle cries echoing over to him. It was still going on. Hiccup raised a shaky hand to his head, knees wobbling where he stood. He found his limbs locked, he couldn't move at all. He couldn't will himself to. Did he really want to go over there? But his village was being attacked! People were in danger! And so was Astridâ€¦ the thought made his eyes narrow. He wouldn't let them, Toothless could help him, they would put an end to this.

He lifted his foot up, starting forward, when he heard a small whooshing sound behind him. Freezing, Hiccup went rigid, eyes widening as he didn't even dare to breathe. Turning around slowly, Hiccup faced the thing that had snuck up on him, cold rushing over

him as he saw her. The Night Fury seemed even more menacing, thinner than she had been last time he had seen her. She had ugly scars along her flank, every detail seeming to be sharp and bright to him even in the smoke. Her eyes were gleaming with a strange light as she looked at him, like that of a predator looking down at their prey. The thought made Hiccup's knees shake, and he opened his mouth to yell out Toothless's name. But his voice was gone, he couldn't find his way to yell for his dragon. All he could do was stare stupidly, frozen with fear and trembling so much that his vision wavered. The thing that had caused all of his problems was back.

The dragon let out a chuckle at his surprise, green eyes narrowing into slits as she slowly padded forward. Her head was slightly down as she came closer, Hiccup not being able to even think about moving. All he could think about was what happened at the cave, the way the female had turned Toothless against him so easily. Could she do it again? Please, no! Not everything again. Was that the reason that everything was picking back up again? His heart was racing so fast, he thought it would burst out of his chest. He almost expected it to.

A slight ringing started up in his head, Hiccup wincing as pain rung through his temple. He lifted up one hand, flinching openly by now as he ducked his head close to his chest. Like waves, pain crashed against the walls of his head, in the back of his eyes. The teen sunk down to the ground, knees sinking into the ground as he did so. One hand propping himself up, Hiccup dug his fingernails in his head tightly, seething as he tried to shake away the pain. Breath coming in gasps, Hiccup let out a yell of pain, head going fuzzy as the relentless pain continued to smack against him mockingly.

The Night Fury was looking down at him coolly, eyes flashing as she watched him with disgust in her eyes. She waited patiently, not even moving a muscle as she watched the boy twitch on the ground, Hiccup's eyes closed tightly as his hand rubbed the side of his head as hard as he could. Opening his mouth, Hiccup let out a scream of pain, going shaky as he felt himself start to fall. He felt himself staggering, he felt himself start to lean over into the ground. He braced himself for the fall, but it never happened.

What did happen, was that the pain gradually stopped. Hiccup blinked open his eyes with surprise, still slightly woozy as he felt the sharp pain back away like waves from the shore. Dropping his hand down to the ground with a smack, Hiccup looked at the ground with wide eyes, panting as he felt the pain stop one by one, on all fours in the muck of the ground. But the pain was replaced by something else, a slight whispering noise, a fuzzy feeling that Hiccup tried to shake away softly. But the movement only made the pain come back somewhat, Hiccup stopping with a wince as the whispering slowly got louder.

He must be going crazy. He was at his breaking point, and now he was falling into madness.

"You must be stupider than I thought!" Hiccup jumped, the voice coming out of nowhere. Eyes widening, Hiccup pushed himself up to his feet like a rocket, spinning around as he tried to see who had spoken. But there was nobody here in the smoke, there was nobody but him and! Slowly, Hiccup turned back around to the dragon, eyeing the Night Fury as he backed away. Maybe he could run away, if he ran fast

enough. But the woman's voice continued. "A bitâ€|confused, I see. Well, that's natural, I suppose. For you humans never were all that familiar with things such as this."

The voice wasâ€|coming from inside his head. Insideâ€|hisâ€|that wasn't possible! He was imagining things! It wasn't possible! It was just the smoke! The voice continued, "You're like a little maggot. Getting into everything you aren't supposed to. Toothless was perfectly happy with me." Hiccup tried to find the woman who was speaking, and yet again, all that was there was the female. Hiccup found himself looking at her. It couldn't be, and yetâ€|SHE was talking. Andâ€|Hiccup could understand her. "And yet you went and ruined everything." The Night Fury bared her teeth, stalking forward once more. "You and every other human on this island. We could have been perfectly happy together, and you went and RUINED IT!" Hiccup flinched from the sudden volume of the words. "And that's why we're doing this."

"I-I-I-I-" Hiccup still couldn't find his voice.

The female crouched to the ground, lunging forward and digging her claws into Hiccup's side, flinging him down on the ground and leaping on top of him at once. Her eyes were narrowed like slits, her breath hot on Hiccup's face as he flattened himself to the ground. "You're dead." She snarled, Hiccup barley hearing her over the roar of confusion in his head. His breath was coming fast and shallow, he couldn't breathe, he couldn't think. This wasn't happening. This wasn't happening. It couldn't be happening. It just couldn't. It didn't make sense. "I will tear you apart limb by limb until you feel the pain I felt in losing Toothless all because of you."

It wasn't possible. Something was wrong with him. She was going to kill him. But she couldn't be the one talking. He was going to die. He wasn't hearing her! What about Ludi? What was going on his head! And Toothless, and Shadowclaw? Something was wrong with him, he wasn't thinking straight! He had to get back to Astrid. HE WAS GOING INSANE.

The female sunk her claws into Hiccup's shoulder, the boy letting out a yell of pain, closing his eyes tightly. "Are you going insane?" The dragon's voice purred in his head. "Maybe you should rest. Maybe you should let go." Hiccup's voice faded to a small noise, the boy's body relaxing at once, eyes fluttering to stay open. "Sleepâ€|" The voice whispered. "That's all you need. It's all a dreamâ€|it'll be fine once you wake up. Go to sleep, it'll be easy."

Hiccup felt the ground give way underneath him, he felt the grip of the dragon fade from his thoughts. His mind grew fuzzy, his thoughts getting blurred together. He couldn't think anymore, he didn't WANT to think. He just wanted to stay hereâ€|it was better here. Hiccup felt himself sinking, sinking away from everything that was going on in front of him. His thoughts slipped through his fingers like sand, and he felt himself falling.

The blackness began to swallow him up, little by little, taking every inch of him and trying to suck him down into its depths.

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things." He turned around to go, and Mistyeyes smiled at his turned back.

"Of course I won't make a mess of things." She said, too low for him to hear as she watched him bound away into the fighting mess. "I'm a Night Fury, aren't I?" She ended her words on a sarcastic note, her smile turning into a deep frown as she whipped around, ready to go back to what she was doing before she got interrupted. But something was blocking her path. Mistyeyes skidded to an ungraceful stop, paws digging up dirt in the ground as she backed away somewhat.

A human stood in front of her, huffing for breath with one eye closed in pain. They held a sword, pointing it right at Mistyeyes's chest, a somewhat sad look in its blue eyes. The sight made Mistyeyes's heart wrench in pain, the Night Fury's eyes widening as she looked down at the small thing. Her ears flicked back and forth, mind racing as she looked at the human. She would kill a human when the moon turned purple!

Floundering for a moment, she raised one paw, bringing it up and holding it in midair in front of the human's face. This was how they said hi, right? But the girl blinked, seeming lost as she lowered the spear somewhat. She looked at her with confusion, as if trying to find out whether or not she was trying to attack her. Mistyeyes dropped her paw with a slam, remembering what she was supposed to be doing with a flash. Looking at the girl one last time, the Night Fury charged away from her, brushing past the smaller human and taking off.

She searched the village as best she could through the smoke, charging in circles, and zigzags, and loop-the-loops. But nothing showed up for her. Cursing under her breath, Mistyeyes looked from side to side, ears slicking down to her head sourly. That was when she realized something else that hadn't showed up to her yet. Nightflight. Eyes widening, Mistyeyes's head whipped around to the forest, narrowing her eyes as she pushed herself up to her feet once more and racing forward.

She felt like enemies were right at her feet, licking at her heels and forcing her to go faster. Her heart pounded in her chest and thumped loudly in her ears. She didn't know where she was going, but all she knew was that she had to find Nightflight before anybody else did. It was a feeling rooted deep inside her bones, urging her one with a panicked voice.

Exploding into the forest, Mistyeyes looked both ways, panting as she perked her ears, straining to hear something that would give her a clue on where to go. At first, it was all quiet, nothing moved and nothing made a sound. But then she heard a faint rumbling sound—paw steps thumping on the ground. It was—heading in this direction? Mistyeyes glanced behind her, confused. It was getting closer—

Suddenly, something slammed into her, knocking the Night Fury over and making her skid forward painfully on the grass. She cursed herself as she hissed in pain, teeth clenched as she sat upright. Looking back around, she glared at the person that had slammed into her, opening her mouth to shoot a sharp retort back to them. But then she stopped, snapping her mouth shut as she watched the dragon push himself back up. "Toothless?" She questioned, tilting her head to the

side as she blinked.

The Night Fury looked up, realization flashing in his eyes as he met eyes with the she-dragon. "Mistyeyes?" He echoed her own tone, seeming lost as he sized her up. Then he seemed to remember fully as he bared his teeth at her. "What are you doing here?" He barked out, glaring daggers at her. "I thought I told you to get lost! Can't you see this is why I didn't want you coming back?"

"Excuse me!" The dragon yelled loudly. "But wasn't I the one that tried to warn you about this happening? You were the one that didn't want to listen, you should have believed me! Maybe this wouldn't even be happening if you weren't so stubborn!"

"You're the one calling me stubborn?" Toothless snorted. "You're the one that won't leave us alone!"

"I'm trying to protect you!"

"Why would you ever do that?"

"Becauseâ€¦ becauseâ€¦" Mistyeyes snapped her mouth shut, glaring at Toothless hotly. "I just am, okay? Not all Night Furies are bad, you know! You aren't! Maybe I just want to be like you, is that so much to believe? After all, you must have wanted it too, by the way you came here once before."

"And what are you doing in the forest might I add?" Toothless growled, seeming not to have heard her last statement as he made no move to reacting to it.

"I don't even know what you're doing here!" Mistyeyes exclaimed.

"I'M looking for Hiccup!" The sentence was spoken between them in unison.

The two Night Furies stopped with surprise, looking between one another with large eyes. Toothless seemed lost for words, gaping as he looked at her in confusion. Mistyeyes met his eyes with a straight face, gaze almost challenging him to say something she raised her chin in defiance. "You don't know me as well as you think you do, Toothless." She said firmly. "And until you come to terms with that, we'll be on a wild goose chase doing nothing."

Searching her eyes, Toothless opened his mouth, preparing to say something, when he broke off. The dragon lifted his head, blinking as he looked the other way. "Did you hear that?" He asked, green eyes sweeping the foliage that surrounded them. Mistyeyes shook her head slowly, looking at Toothless with somewhat wide eyes, waiting for him to say something.

Glancing at her, Toothless beckoned for her to follow, getting up and crouching low to the ground as he crept forward. Mistyeyes followed suit, slinking with her belly nearly touching the ground. Her ears were straining to hear a noise, to hear whatever had set Toothless off so quickly. They were leaving the village behind rapidly, the smoke fading away until it was just a far-off smell that did nothing to effect the two dragons, not that it did before.

They crawled along for a long time, Mistyeyes's muscles cramping from being so tight for so long. She had no idea how or what Toothless could have heard, but the dragon was so fixated on following the unknown thing that Mistyeyes decided that asking her question wouldn't go too well with the dragon. Even speaking a single word would not go well with him. It was a miracle that he had brought her along with whatever he was doing.

Finally, Mistyeyes caught what Toothless had heard, a rustling in the undergrowth, footsteps that were slowly increasing speed. Mistyeyes blinked thoughtfully, straightening somewhat as she looked over at Toothless. Catching her gaze, the dragon motioned for her to get down once more, but she didn't listen, looking at the spot where the sound was coming from intently. There was a voice now.

"Come on." She whispered, walking upright now as she walked forward carefully. Toothless huffed angrily, looking almost grouchy as he followed her lead now. The sight would have made Mistyeyes roll her eyes if the situation had been different, but she was too fixed on walking forward by this time. The voice was quiet, but distinguishable all the same. Narrowing her eyes, Mistyeyes muttered the name under her breath angrily. "Nightflight."

Toothless paused at the name, blinking as he looked from Mistyeyes to the spot where the clearing would open up. For a moment, he faltered, looking back and forth. But then he steeled himself, taking in a deep breath as he closed the distance, breaking the rim of plants and stepping into the clearing. Mistyeyes let him go first, getting up to walk after him when a roar caused her to leap about a foot in the air. Blinking rapidly, she ran after him clumsily, tripping over her feet as she staggered into the clearing. "What!" She yelled breathlessly. "What happened!"

She turned to see Toothless wrestling on the ground with Nightflight, the two trying to pin the other down to the ground as they slashed at each other with their claws fully out. It took Mistyeyes a moment to sort out her thoughts, forcing herself into motion as she leapt into the mess, waiting until she had a clear shot for Nightflight as she leaned forward and gave a hefty blow to the dragoness's head. Nightflight yowled with shock, falling to the side and getting off of Toothless, shaking her head back and forth to try and clear it. Blood was trickling down her forehead and seeping into her eyes, Mistyeyes huffed for breath, Toothless getting up and standing beside her, looking fit to kill.

Silence weighed in the clearing, the three dragons facing one another with labored breath. But then Nightflight purred silkily, closing her eyes as she did so. "So, Mistyeyes." She laughed breezily. "You won't raise a paw against a human, but when it comes to somebody of your own family, you'll do it without a second thought. I thought you said you wanted justice?"

"I do." Mistyeyes panted, looking right at Nightflight. "You are no family of mine."

Nightflight frowned, her eyes turning critical. She shifted her gaze to look at Toothless, smiling in a sickly way at the dragon. "So, Toothless." She mused, eyes dancing with dark humor. "We've met once more. There is still chance for you to join me, we could forget about everything else. It would be easy." Mistyeyes looked over at the

other dragon standing next to her, narrowing her eyes to slits.

"Don't look at her." She commanded sternly, Toothless jerking his head away so that he was looking at Mistyeyes instead. The dragon gave him a small smile that was meant to be encouraging, all that she could do as of this moment. Toothless blinked at her, but did not do anything else, flicking his ears as he spoke back to Nightflight, still facing Mistyeyes.

"You know I would never do that." He growled angrily.

Nightflight sniffed disdainfully. "Maybe." She conceded. "But I can't figure out why you would ever come back to this stinking place. After all, what would happen if you slipped again? Maybe this isn't my doing, maybe it's your's-"

"That's ridiculous! Don't listen to her, Toothless!" Mistyeyes turned and looked directly into Nightflight's eyes, green eyes boring into blue. "It's obviously just you, Toothless is doing fine! Leave him out of this, Nightflight, he got away from you once, don't make him do it again." Toothless growled at her words, obviously thinking that he would rather attack Nightflight again than sit here talking, but Mistyeyes ignored it without a thought. "I'm not afraid of you, Nightflight."

"Really?" The dragon laughed. "That wasn't the way I thought it went when you agreed to lead this battle party."

"WHAT!" Toothless yelled so loud that it made Mistyeyes jump into the air, the frightened dragon looking back at him with wide eyes. "What does she mean, LEAD it?" He snarled, throwing his face into her's. Mistyeyes gaped, groping for something to say, some way to explain it, but her mouth ran dry, her mind went blank. "I can't believe this, is this some kind of ambush?" Toothless demanded.

"N-No!" Mistyeyes yelled rapidly, forcing her voice to come back to her. "I would never do that! It's just that she saw me coming back from Berk after I tried to warn you about this and she demanded that I show my loyalty! I wanted to stay so that I could try and find out more things to warn you about, but it didn't work because I just gave myself away!" Mistyeyes's ears flattened back to her head as she blinked, shying away from both dragons that were now giving her the same odd look.

Toothless gave her a long look for a moment, not answering. Mistyeyes winced as he finally spoke up, but his words were directed at Nightflight, not her. "Where's Hiccup?" He growled softly, glancing at her out of the corner of his eye. When she merely curled up her tail, Toothless raised his voice. "Where's Hiccup!"

"I don't know." Nightflight sang lightly.

Mistyeyes threw a sharp glare over at the dragon. "Of course you know." She bared her teeth.

"Stay out of this!" Toothless commanded.

"So you don't believe me?" Mistyeyes shrieked.

"I have to sort this all out, I don't know who to believe!"

"You're going to believe that piece of trash instead of me?"

Nightflight blinked, watching the scene with mild interest.

"Fine!" Mistyeyes snapped, letting her anger get the best of her. "Fine then, I'll just leave!" Toothless's face cleared, as if he realized that this might be a mistake. But it was too late, she was sick of his stupid mood swings. Spinning around, she glared down at the ground sourly. "If you don't want my help, I'll just leave you to your thoughts then."

"No, wait-" Toothless tried to stop her, but Mistyeyes bounded away into the foliage, fuming silently to herself. So what if he didn't want her help, it wasn't she wanted to help him. After all, he had yelled at her the first time she tried to help, why had she tried to do it a second time. Blue eyes narrowed, she turned back, circling around the clearing and looping back into the forest. She didn't know where she was going, she just knew it would be somewhere better than where she was before.

"Mistyeyes!" The dragon faltered as Toothless called out her name, but shook her head, tilting her chin up and walking away stubbornly.

Flattening his ears, Toothless growled uneasily under his breath. If he said that he didn't feel bad, that would be lying. Looking across the clearing at Nightflight, anger boiled underneath the dragon's hide. "This is all your fault!" He thundered angrily. "Why did you even come back, can't you leave us alone at all?" His claws slid out, digging into the ground and leaving deep gouges in the ground. "Can't you just keep your nose where it belongs?"

"I could, but that wouldn't be much fun at all, would it?" Nightflight mused happily.

"Tch." Toothless glared at her sharply. "It would be a lot less annoying, do you really want me to slip again?" His claws flashed in the moonlight, Nightflight looking down at them calmly, not at all fazed. "I will, if you hurt anybody. And you've already done that. Now, I'll ask again. Where is Hiccup?"

She smiled. "He ruined it for me." She said lowly. "He's mine now."

Toothless's eyes widened.

"I mean- some people just don't know manners." Mistyeyes growled, picking her way through the forest angrily. "When you HELP somebody, you're supposed to get thanked in return. But SOME dragons just don't know the first thing about saying thank you. They just think that they can do whatever they want and get something in return. I mean- the NERVE of that guy! He gets under my skin so easily, he's just so stubborn! I wish that-" Mistyeyes broke off, ear flicking to the side as she heard something.

Raising her head, she blinked rapidly. "Toothlessâ€¦is that you?" She called dubiously.

There was a muffled response, something that made Mistyeyes blink. The voice didn't sound like any dragon she'd ever met before. Her mind flashed back to the Nadder that had tried to chase her down her first time in Berk, could it be her? "Come out." She demanded sternly. Claws sliding out on instinct, Mistyeyes stood waiting with a lashing tail, looking at a plant fixedly as it rustled.

Finally, the figure staggered into the clearing, looking a little dazed. At once, Mistyeyes brightened, claws sliding back and a gleam in her eye. "Hiccup!" She cheered happily, paws kneading the ground. "This is great! Toothless will be so happy to know that I found you! He's been really worried! After all-" She broke off, blinking as she tilted her head at Hiccup. The boy was staring at her with wide eyes, seeming to be somewhat terrified by her.

"What's wrong?" She pressed, immediately rolling her eyes to herself. It wasn't as if he could respond, he was a human. But still—something was wrong with Hiccup, he was acting different. Walking forward slowly, she let out a small rumbling noise of concern, blue eyes troubled as he looked Hiccup up and down. The boy scooted away from her slowly, seeming to try and wrap his mind around whatever was happening.

She opened her mouth to say something, but immediately jumped with shock as Toothless exploded into the clearing. "Mistyeyes, you've got to-" He whirled around, eyes going round as the moon. "Hiccup!" The boy seemed even afraid of his dragon, he looked overwhelmed. "Mistyeyes, you've got to-" He broke off with a yowl as Nightflight ran into the clearing, eyes wild and crazy as she roared into the smoky sky. The fire's orange glow was catching, the haze was getting closer and closer to where the three dragons were standing.

Whipping around, Toothless launched himself forward, meeting Nightflight in midair as he slammed her down to the ground. The dragoness howled in pain, Toothless looking back at Mistyeyes with a panicked look. "I'm sorry!" He said in a rush, Mistyeyes as overwhelmed as Hiccup looked. "Get Hiccup somewhere safe, I'll hold her off!"

"What about you?" Mistyeyes yelled, looking from Hiccup to Toothless.

"Just go! I'll be fine!"

"No!" Nightflight howled, looking over at both Mistyeyes and Hiccup. "You know this is wrong, you know, it, don't you?" Mistyeyes blinked, confused. Was she talking to her? What was she blathering about? "Don't let them do this, you know who's the right one here!" Her voice was rising with panic as she went on.

"Don't tell me what to think." Mistyeyes growled, Nightflight shooting her a look. Turning around quickly, she flattened herself down to the ground in front of Hiccup, the boy looking at her with wide eyes. "Come on!" She yelled vainly. "We've got to go!" When Hiccup didn't move still, Mistyeyes leaned forward, tugging at his sleeve with her teeth, careful not to catch any skin. Her heart was beating in her chest so hard she thought that it might burst, the adrenaline making her almost shaky as she trembled on the ground.

Finally, Hiccup climbed onto her back, holding onto her as tight as he could, nearly choking her neck as she blinked rapidly. Shaking her head, Mistyeyes shot off of the ground, unfurling her wings and catching the air as she climbed up into the night sky. Her breath came in gasps, and when she finally stopped, Berk was a small smudge on the water. Looking down, Mistyeyes hovered in the air, trying to get her breathing under control. "This should be good." She gasped. "We can wait here until all of the other dragons leave. They will leaveâ€right?" Her question hung in the air, the dragoness's wings the only sound except for the distant crumbling of the island's homes.

Then Hiccup spoke up. "I hope so."

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A/N: I tried not to do a cliffhanger hereâ€¦did it work? *says hopefully* My sister is having a friend over later, so I might get a new chapter out maybe tonight. But I like this friend, so I might hang with them and be a total party crasher! :D

For nowâ€¦*scurries away to my Kingdom Hearts game* Does anybody out there play Kingdom Hearts? I'm thinking of doing a fanfiction for itâ€¦I'm on a Disney kick right now..

You should search up Bad Dream by Kesha, cause that's a good Toothless song ^^

11. Chapter 11

A/N: Sorry about the break, I don't get much time to get on here cause I've been playing Kingdom Hearts with that fazed, mouth-open, addicted look on my face as I soared through the game. That's a pretty awesome game, any of those who have PS2s', you should go and buy Kingdom Hearts! :D

I've been trying to spread it around school.

(plus I had to sort this thing outâ€¦) *guilty look* :3 And BTW: Those of you who caught what Nightflight said and thought it was a little oddâ€¦ ;)

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Watching Mistyeyes and Hiccup soaring away into the sky, Toothless allowed himself a small breath of relief, closing his eyes as he did so. Knees nearly shaky with relief, Toothless almost had forgotten that he was not the only one in the clearing. The realization made him perk up, blinking rapidly as he swung back down to look at Nightflight. The dragoness didn't even look that disappointed about the fact that they had gotten away from her, in fact, she actually looked a little excited by the prospect. Her green eyes were bright, her ears flicking back and forth as she looked up calmly at Toothless.

Baring his teeth angrily, his voice came out in a low snarl. "I could kill you right now." He growled harshly, looking down almost

cross-eyed at her. He wasn't even putting a lot of weight on her, and yet she did nothing. Was she waiting for him to waver? He shook himself mentally, that wouldn't happen.

"But you wont." She declared, a hint of amusement hidden in her voice. Toothless twitched angrily, but did not reply as he looked down at her. "After all, that's not the way you've been taught, isn't that right?" He stiffened angrily as she said this, Nightflight smiling as she noticed this. "So if you're just going to end up letting me go, you might as well do it before you lose any other shred of dignity you have left, hmm?"

"Who says I lost my dignity?" Toothless snapped irritably, glaring at her. His tail lashed back and forth, flicking short-temperedly. "It's you who should be ashamed of yourself! Do you even know what you're doing right now, or are you just doing it to entertain yourself?" The words ended in a snarl, Toothless's lip curling in disgust.

"Of course I know what I'm doing." She quipped, suddenly lashing forward and flipping Toothless off of her skillfully. The larger dragon's breath whooshed out of him as he flew to the side, not expecting the sudden attack. Puffing for breath, he pushed himself up weakly to stand, one eye closed in pain as he winced. Nightflight stood, stretching herself dramatically as she took to sitting down on the grass. She eyed Toothless with an almost playful smirk, eyes glimmering. "You could still change your mind, you know." She said, her voice rising and falling as if in a tune. "You could just be with me and choose NOT to die."

"Fat chance." Toothless snapped. "It's not like you didn't give me that chance before. And look what happened when I agreed?" He waved his tail behind him, pointing to the fire raging behind him. He thought that it looked a little better by now, the fire shrinking rather than growing. But maybe it was just his imagination. "I know better than I did last time, I'm staying with Hiccup. And there's nothing you can do to change that."

Nightflight hummed under her breath, expression losing a little of its amusement. She flicked her tail dismissively, opening her mouth to say something else to the dragon. But she was cut off as a loud roar echoed across the island, the female raising her head and blinking slowly as the call echoed across the island. "Hmm." She huffed, looking back at Toothless. "I'm afraid this will have to wait until we meet again." She said, her expression a little disappointed. Getting to her feet, she turned, wings extending out, black against the charred foliage around them.

Toothless suddenly jerked, lurching forward and throwing himself at her. The female gasped, falling face-forward to the ground with a thump. Dipping his head down slightly, Toothless glared at the back of her head, digging his claws into her skin tightly. "You said something about Hiccup when we first found you!" He shouted, even though he was right on top of her. "What did you mean by that?" His ears flicked as he waited for her answer, but all she did was laugh slightly under her breath. Gritting his teeth together, he shouted again, louder this time. "TELL ME!"

Yet another roar echoed around the island, Toothless being caught off-guard as he raised his head to look behind him. His grip slackened with surprise, eyes widening as he realized that the fire

was dimming into a smoky cloud raising into the sky. Nightflight took that chance, grunting as she shot up to her feet, Toothless falling to the side with a startled yell. Without missing a beat, Nightflight shot into the sky, the wind catching her wings as she shot up into the sky at rocket speed.

Looking up with a startled expression, Toothless narrowed his eyes. "You really wanna see who's faster, Nightflight?" He growled, determination entering his eyes as he crouched to the ground. His wings shot out at his sides, the dragon bunching his muscles in anticipation. "Let's race." He shot into the sky, as fast as Nightflight if not faster.

Humid, muggy wind slapped back into his face, nearly choking him as he forced himself to breath it in. Wings beating a mile a minute, the dragon made quick progress of gaining air, hovering in one place as he went as high as he could get. Whirling around clumsily, Toothless growled with frustration as tried to see through the pitch dark sky. He couldn't see any of the other Night Furies, much less a sign of Nightflight, the thought making him curse himself for not being faster. If only-

"Oh, so you want to race now, then?" Nightflight's voice made his head whip back up, wings still beating hard as he looked around quickly. Heart beating in his chest, heart in his throat, Toothless searched the sky around him, bracing himself for a fight. But disappointment and confusion swamped him as he found nothing. No, wait—THERE! Nightflight was flying a few yards away from him, the only visible thing right now her eyes, which gleamed in the dark light. "Well, we'll have to pick it up another time, I really am late for something. Very important."

His mixed thoughts were the soul thing that kept Toothless still long enough for Nightflight to whirl around and leave. And when he finally realized that she had left, he was confused on where she went, causing him to remain at stand-still even longer. "Darn!" He cursed loudly, spitting a small fireball angrily to the right. "How will I get to her if she keeps confusing me like that?" He growled.

"You could start by looking where you shoot." Toothless started at the sound of a voice, turning and spotted Mistyeyes as she swooped closer. The dragon seemed to be troubled by something, her blue eyes slightly clouded as she stopped in front of him. Wildly, Toothless immediately thought of Hiccup, but relief washed over him as he spotted the boy hanging onto Mistyeyes's back like he had left them.

"Right—sorry." He said, giving her a small smile. Mistyeyes merely blinked, looking him up and down. She still didn't know what that was, he'd forgotten. "How is everything?" He asked, stealing a glance down at the island. The fire was dwindling by now, they would need more dragons to help put out the fire soon enough. That or lose more buildings for no reason.

"Oh, yeah." She said quickly, giving a slow nod. "Everything's fine—" She trailed off thoughtfully, blinking at Toothless curiously. It looked like she wanted to ask him something. "Hey, I have a question." There it was. Toothless stared at her expectantly, head tilted to the side slightly. Hiccup was watching intently from where he hung onto Mistyeyes. "Have you ever met somebody who you

talked to?" Toothless looked at her strangely, Mistyeyes blinking rapidly as she looked at him. When he failed to respond, she smiled, an actually pretty smile for somebody who was just trying it.

"I'm talking to you right now, Mistyeyes." He said slowly, a little impatiently.

"An awkward silence." Mistyeyes finally got out.

More silence.

"Let's go." Toothless said slowly, still looking at her weird as he turned. She looked all for doing something, immediately turning and shooting away from him, almost a little bit too fast. Hiccup looked jarred from where he sat, letting out a small yelp as he clung on tighter. Shaking himself, Toothless followed suit, rocketing after her as he swooped down.

Nearing the island, Toothless's heart suddenly flipped over in his chest. It had taken him a long time to even think about trusting her, and now she was going to parade into the village with Hiccup riding on her back? He opened his mouth to call out to her, but winced as he already heard the shouts rising up from the village. He could see the fingers pointing up, signaling out the other Night Fury that was flying alongside Toothless. He could foresee the anger that Stoick would bestow upon all three of them soon enough.

"Brace yourself." He murmured, glancing over at Mistyeyes.

She nodded tensely, nervousness lingering in her eyes as she didn't look at him.

Landing on the charred grass, Toothless winced as the whole of the village immediately rushed over to them, feet throwing up ash around them as they raced forward. "I'm right here." He said lowly, trying to be comforting as he looked over at her. She threw him a look, almost defiant. He could almost hear her saying: Don't push it. It almost made him laugh, Toothless hardening at the last moment as he took a step away from her. He looked away stubbornly. Not again.

Hiccup slid off of Mistyeyes, falling to his feet rather clumsily as he staggered somewhat. "It's okay! It's okay!" He yelled quickly, throwing his hands out to the others as they crowded around him. A few held weapons, most of them looked too worn out to do anything but look at the dragon with tired-looking eyes. "She's a friend, she helped me out in the forest!"

"And you know this time, do you?" Hiccup winced visibly as Stoick's voice thundered across the clearing to him. The chief pushed his way closer through the crowd, looking down at Hiccup with narrowed eyes. "The last time you told us this, it didn't end well. It still isn't ending well!" Straightening self-consciously, Hiccup looked around the village with one eye closed. It wasn't like saying it was his fault, it was Toothless's fault too. The dragon snorted, pushing past Mistyeyes and standing beside Hiccup comfortably.

"I'm sure about it this time!" Hiccup pressed. "I know for certain.

She helped me and Toothless out in the forest, I got attacked by the same female that was here before. She was there and she fought her off before anything bad happened to me." Stoick looked over at Mistyeyes with a glare, obviously not trusting of the creature. She met his gaze clearly. "Remember how the female was mean at first? This one is nice, she let me ride her and everything quicker than Toothless did!"

"That's not the point, son." Stoick said tensely.

"Then what is?" Hiccup asked, exasperated. "She helped me, why can't she just-"

"She's different." Hiccup turned back, surprise lighting his face as he saw Astrid. The blonde had stepped up, her chin raised slightly. "She ran into me and she didn't even try and attack me. She's different than the other dragons, I'm sure of it."

"And I'll believe a bunch of Vikings in training over-"

"Does he always yell like this?" Mistyeyes asked, looking the chief up and down.

"Sometimes he goes so long, I wonder when he'll pass out." Toothless said, looking over at her, eyes sparkling with mischief. Mistyeyes chuckled, looking over at Toothless with sparkling eyes.

Hiccup snorted with laughter where he stood. Toothless blinked, looking over at him, looking a little lost.

Stoick looked over at his son with a stern look, Hiccup snapping his mouth shut as he tried to stifle his laughter. But looking from Astrid to Hiccup, the chief turned back to Mistyeyes, looking her up and down. It seemed as if everyone was sizing each other up. Thinking fast, Toothless nudged the other female in the side, giving her a low smile and jerking his head in the direction of Stoick. Getting the message pretty fast, Mistyeyes smiled at the chief a little too largely, ears flicking back and forth. Stoick seemed surprised by the action. Galloping forward, Mistyeyes approached Stoick a little warily, tilting her head to the side as she sniffed the chief. The people watching didn't move, waiting to see if what the two said was true. Leaning forward, Mistyeyes licked Stoick's cheek wetly, purring loudly as she smiled once more.

Stoick seemed stunned, looking at the Night Fury like it was an alien thing to him. She lashed her tail happily back and forth, eyes bright. A few of the smaller girls in the crowd threw out yells, soon brought up by others. "She's so cute!" "It's a girl Night Fury!" "I wanna ride her, does she go as fast as Toothless?" "We can find out!" "Can we keep her?" The remains of the village went unnoticed for the time being, the children's worn out looks brightened as they looked at her, and looking around, both Hiccup and Toothless smiled. It was the way it needed to stay.

Stoick looked around at the village, hardly able to say no with this many people throwing large: Aww's at the female. Looking a little disgruntled, he turned to Hiccup. "Are you sure this time?" He asked sternly, narrowing his eyes. "This is your last chance, Hiccup. We do NOT need any more trouble than we already have."

smiles were here? Or was it just those that were with Hiccup? Mistyeyes hadn't gotten the chance to meet with any of the other dragons just yet. "I thought you left a long time ago!" Shadowclaw said, turning back to her for a moment.

Mistyeyes looked down at the smaller thing with soft eyes. "I came back to protect Berk. Although, I wouldn't say I did a really splendid job." She added with dry humor, eyeing the charred buildings around her. "I met up with Toothless and helped him out of a tight spot." Puffing out her chest almost unconsciously, she tilted her chin up. "I'm apart of Berk now, and I'm going to help against the other Night Furies."

"That's great!" Shadowclaw exclaimed happily, eyes still open wide as he looked up at her. "With you being here, it'll be two times as fun around here!" Glancing around, Mistyeyes concluded that this place needed all the 'fun' it could get. But she kept her mouth closed, having missed half of what Shadowclaw was saying by the time she snapped to attention. The little dragon was talking a mile a minute, not bothering to breath as he rambled on.

"You haven't met Ludi yet, have you?" He asked suddenly, pausing for a moment as he looked at Mistyeyes curiously. Mistyeyes shook her head, watching as Shadowclaw arranged himself oddly for a moment, nudging the thing off of his back gently. "This is Ludi!" He declared, the small thing sitting down neatly by him. "She's a cat!" It took him a moment to locate the word. "She doesn't talk, but she's really fun to be around! Me and her play all the time!"

Mistyeyes glanced over at Toothless, eyes sparkling with amusement. Toothless shrugged. "It's a long story." He sighed, too low for Shadowclaw to notice. Mistyeyes let out a small chuckle, leaning down and putting her face close to Ludi's own. The small cat let out a high-pitched noise, leaning forward and lifting one of her paws, swatting Mistyeyes's nose with a defiant look. Blinking rapidly, Mistyeyes drew back sharply, wiggling her nose in a comical way, Toothless's tail flicking back and forth as he tried not to laugh.

It was FLUFFY! It was so SOFT! Mistyeyes laughed, a little louder than before. Leaning down again, she lifted her own paw and touched the little cat's side softly. She smiled largely, Shadowclaw kneading the ground with his paws where he stood as he watched. The cat eyed her up and down, nose wrinkling. Ears flicking back and forth, the cat suddenly looked to the side, letting out yet another loud noise. Mistyeyes drew back as soon as she did, alarmed that she had maybe done something to hurt it.

But then she saw what had made the thing squeal. A young girl was making her way towards them, blue eyes slightly narrowed. "That's Astrid." Toothless whispered over to her. "She's Hiccup's friend." His words calmed Mistyeyes a little. She didn't want to meet anybody that wouldn't like her yet. She would prove herself as soon as she could, that much was certain. And this was the girl she had let go during the raid, it wasn't like this Astrid had a reason to be mad at her, right?

Shaking herself mentally, Mistyeyes jerked as she realized the girl was looking at her intently. Scales burning, Mistyeyes's mind went

blank as she tried to figure out what to do. Did she even need to do anything? Mind flying backwards, Mistyeyes winced inwardly, but decided that she would try it anyhow. And even if it didn't work, it wasn't like anything bad would happen. "Hello?" She tried weakly, Toothless turning to look at her oddly. Just like she had expected, the Astrid girl did not show any signs of understanding her. Pushing down her disappointment, she did the only thing she could think of, and gave the girl a small smile.

Seeming to cut it, Astrid leaned down and reached out, scooping up the cat in her arms. Ludi let out another high-pitched noise, turning and trying to get comfortable with a small scowl on her face. "C'mon, Ludi." Astrid said softly, looking around the village. "I'm going to clean you up here. You're a mess." Pausing for a moment, she looked over at Toothless. "Do you know where Hiccup is?" She asked, tilting her head to the side. "I can't find him anywhere."

Mistyeyes glanced over at Toothless, already expecting the worried look that was creased over the dragon's face. She didn't even need to say anything as she watched Astrid turn and hurry away, she didn't even need to glance over at Toothless. She got to her feet the same time he did, the dragon turning and looking over at her quizzically. "You don't expect me to let you go alone, do you?" She asked irritably. "We're not sure if all of the Night Furies actually left or not. Some might be hiding in the forest."

She obviously did not sooth any of his fears. "Hiccup would be in the forest." Toothless said, voice slightly hollow. Mistyeyes merely blinked, not sure whether or not Toothless was right. But it wasn't like she was going to object at a time like this. She hadn't been on this island long enough to know things, much less know her way around. She was going to stick with Toothless. That or risk getting lost somehow. She would find a way to lose her way.

"Come on then." Toothless ordered, giving a glance over at Shadowclaw to confirm that the youngling was going to follow. Charging off at full speed, Toothless left Mistyeyes in the dust. Gasping quickly, Mistyeyes grit her teeth together, narrowing her eyes. Pushing off of the ground, Mistyeyes took off after him, refusing to stay behind. Passing up Shadowclaw, Mistyeyes caught up to Toothless as quick as a flash, matching him stride for stride as they left the village behind.

"Do you always do this?" She puffed, glancing over at him.

"Do what?" He muttered, not even looking at her. His eyes were fixed straight ahead of them.

They burst through the line of trees, or what would have been the rim of trees that signaled the forest's start. Now they were burned own, shriveled to a crisp. It was simply a miracle the entire forest didn't catch fire, even though a small section was still standing untouched. "Being so quick to act." Mistyeyes explained, only half-kidding. This earned a sharp look from the dragon. "It's not the way you think, though." Mistyeyes said quickly. "I just mean that Hiccup could just be walking around the village away from Astrid. It doesn't mean you have to go charging into the forest. He's not THAT helpless, right?"

Toothless opened his mouth to say something, snapping his mouth

closed as Shadowclaw started laughing where he ran behind them. Obviously he agreed with one of them, and it wasn't Toothless. Mistyeyes bit her lip to keep from laughing. Throwing her a dirty look, Toothless skidded to a stop, whirling around and catching Shadowclaw as the small dragon rammed into his chest. "Shadowclaw, fly back to the village and search there." He ordered sternly.

Mistyeyes was starting to think this was getting ridiculous, though she didn't dare say anything.

"Oh." Shadowclaw glanced back the way they came, wings already buzzing. "Sure!" Turning around with a swipe of his tail, Shadowclaw launched himself into the air, fumbling for a moment before catching his air, letting out a happy noise as he started to zoom away. He was quite talented for somebody who just started flying. Mistyeyes smiled, he was a good youngling.

"Do you ever feel guilty?" She asked suddenly, before Toothless could start running again. Faltering, Toothless blinked, obviously confused. Turning her gaze onto him, Mistyeyes nodded after Shadowclaw. "By keeping him here. His mother isn't here. Don't you ever wonder how upset she is?" Mistyeyes knew firsthand how depressed his mother had been, but she didn't add that part, finding that it would probably be worse for wear for Toothless.

The dragon shrugged, seeming unbothered. Not at all like Mistyeyes had figured he would reply. "I mean- I didn't ask him to come. He came on his own, just like you. Would you like me to send YOU back?" Mistyeyes blinked, refusing to say anything. He gave a nod. "That's what I thought." He declared, Mistyeyes's eye twitched angrily. "Now, can we just--"

"But I'm an entirely different situation." She objected, tail flicking. "I'm not a youngling."

"That doesn't matter." Toothless said, trying to keep his temper down. "Can we just go?"

Glancing after Shadowclaw, Mistyeyes didn't reply. She couldn't get the other Night Furies out of her head for some reason. Was it worse being here and not there? She should have figured things out more and stayed there as a spy. It would have worked out better for everybody, and yet she had to blow her cover. She ACTED like a youngling. Shaking her head, she gave a nod, turning and racing off forward again, Toothless having to play catch-up this time. "I just can't help feeling I shouldn't be here." She muttered, the words slipping out.

Toothless took a moment to reply. "Of course you belong here." He said gruffly, scanning the area around them to keep a look out. "Every dragon does. The other Night Furies belong here too." Mistyeyes's ears flicked as confusion lit up her face. "But some dragons don't see it like we do. I thought that way when Nightflight put me under her spell, and it was an entirely different view of things. I didn't understand it before either, but now I do."

"No, not that." Mistyeyes sighed. "I mean, I should have stayed to be a spy for you. I'm not use to you here." Her ears flicked as she spoke, a frown creasing over her face. Toothless looked over at her,

looking a little reluctant for some reason. Mistyeyes sighed, rolling her eyes as she turned her gaze back forward stubbornly. "Sorry, I know this isn't the time." She growled under her breath. "We have to find Hiccup, he might be in trouble."

"Mistyeyes." Toothless slowed suddenly, Mistyeyes blinking as she charged ahead of him. Skidding to a stop, she turned, gasping for air by now as she looked back. Toothless stood in the frame of the trees, head tilted to the side slightly. "I'm GLAD you're here." He said clearly.

Mistyeyes blinked rapidly.

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Hiccup was retracing his steps rapidly, pushing through the ash and remaining leaves and foliage with a slightly panicked look on his face. Where was Ludi? He had looked everywhere, and yet the cat was not where he had left her. Heart beating rapidly in his ears, Hiccup called out her name for what seemed like the umpteenth time. Still, no answer. Letting out a loud frustrated noise, Hiccup stomped his foot into the ground as hard as he could. He looked around aimlessly, hands clenched into fists as he did so. "Ludi!" He yelled, teeth grinding together as he heard nothing.

"Where are you?" He growled through his teeth, the cat the only thing on his mind right now. She would stay the only thing on his mind right now. She NEEDED to be the only thing on his mind as of right now. Thinking about anything else would make it just get worse. Well, it got complicated. The events of the night (LAST night, technically?) went up and above his head, the teen unable to grasp any of it. It was all a blur to him, shapes and colors. Nothing more.

"Ludi?" He asked, his voice quieting somewhat. Giving a small sigh, he started forward once more, eyes narrowing as he glared at every passing tree or bush that still remained. She could be anywhere. What if she had died? He would never know, and he would go all of his life without knowing where Ludi was! What if she had wandered off in the smoke and fell off of the island into the sea? She could be drowning right now and he wouldn't even know it!

"Some people get to wait until they're married to suffer this kind of worry." Hiccup growled.

Suddenly, a noise came from his side, making Hiccup jump and turn. "Ludi?" He called out hopefully, smiling by now. "Ludi, is that you?" He called.

"Hello?" A voice said suddenly, cutting Hiccup short as he stopped. The brunette blinked, curiosity written on his face as he came to a stop. He didn't recognize the voice, or if he did, he didn't remember it. Was a little kid wandering from the village? Did they follow him? The voice spoke again, this time a little softer. "Are you there? Come here, please."

Hiccup looked around, was it talking to him? He should just walk away and go to find Ludi, whoever was here was giving him the creeps. He took a hesitant step backwards, but as soon as he did, the voice

called out once more. "Stop!" It cried, Hiccup freezing on the spot as his eyes widened. He looked around once more, opening his mouth, but closing it. What was he going to say, anyway? It was just a kid, he shouldn't get so worked up over this. Steeling himself, Hiccup walked forward.

"I thought you are always told to stay inside camp?" He said, voice stern as he reached for the bush. "You'd better feel lucky I came along, because if I didn't thenâ€¦youâ€¦wouldn't-" Hiccup blinked, drawing backwards as if something had shocked him. There was nobody there. Eyes widening, Hiccup looked around, spinning and twirling oddly as he searched for the source of the voice. But nothing showed to his search.

He turned to start running back to the village, Ludi completely slipping his mind. He wanted to run all the way to the village in a sprint, fake leg or not. But suddenly, it happened again. "You don't have to do thatâ€¦" The voice said, once again chilling him to the bone as he went still. He was as stiff as a board, unmoving as it continued. "You don't want to go back to the village, do you?"

"â€¦Ye-â€¦N-" Hiccup couldn't find his voice.

"Nobody understands you there, do they?" The voice questioned. It was a female's voice. A voice that made him stop, made him unable to move. He could do nothing but listen to it, his eyes glazing over as he stared forward emptily. "That village is full of fakes and people who just likes you for your stunt. They don't REALLY like you, after all. Such a shame. You're such a nice boy."

In the back of his mind, Hiccup heard his name being called through the forest, faintly heard the pounding of footsteps, but he didn't try to see who it was. He didn't care.

"I understand you." It whispered. "I know everything about you. I care for you. Just stay here, in the forest, with nobody else. You don't NEED anybody else, do you? You just need me, that's all. Toothless abandoned you, who is to say he will not do it again, hmm? You can never tell, can you? You're trapped in a web of endless lies, and I can help untangle it. If you'll let me."

Hiccup opened his mouth to speak back, but suddenly the trance was broken. Mistyeyes crashed into the clearing, looking at Hiccup with alarm in her eyes. Toothless followed after, skidding to a stop after her, green eyes wide with alarm. "Hiccup!" Mistyeyes yelled, Hiccup stumbling away from her at the shock of hearing her voice. She noticed the movement, taking a step backwards as she ducked her head. "Hiccup, I'm so glad you're okay, what happened?"

Toothless looked over at her oddly. "Mistyeyes, why do you always do that?" He asked. "He can't understand you, you should know that much at least!"

Mistyeyes blinked, mouth slightly open as she looked from Toothless to Hiccup, looking lost. Toothless shook his head, rolling his eyes at her. "Now that we know he's okay, we can get him back to the village before anybody notices we're gone, right?" When Mistyeyes only shrugged, he turned back around, giving a small smile at Hiccup. But for once, Hiccup did not return the gesture, Toothless's grin

fading away to an uncertain frown.

Mistyeyes shied away from the scene wincing. "Let's just get back." She said uncomfortably. "This place gives me a weird feeling, I don't know why." Her blue eyes went over the clearing, trying to find the source of what was making her uneasy, making a small huffing sound when she couldn't. Hiccup was still where he stood, looking at the talking dragons like he had never seen them before in his life. Like he had never seen any kind of dragon in his life. His mind was foggy, he couldn't think. Not straight at least.

"Hiccup?" Toothless asked, not listening to Mistyeyes. He had known Hiccup longer than her, and this was sending up a red flag for Toothless. Hiccup was acting weird, and he didn't know why. Usually if the boy was upset, he would try to hide it, but here he wasn't trying to hide anything. It looked like he wanted to run away, and he sure wasn't being subtle about it. He went a little closer, letting out a reassuring coo. "Mistyeyes, help me. We have to get him back to the village, something is wrong."

"NO!" Hiccup yelled loudly, throwing his arms out in front of him as if to shield himself. Toothless blinked, shrinking away at once. Mistyeyes jumped from the sudden volume, peering around Toothless with frightened blue eyes. "Don't take me back there!" Toothless immediately blustered, looking back at Mistyeyes, who gave him a small smug look, not all that interested to gloat right now. Falling down, Hiccup sat on the ground, drawing his knees to his chest and ducking his head. "Don't take me back!" He shouted, closing his eyes tightly.

"What's going on?" Toothless asked wildly, looking back at Mistyeyes. "How can he—"

"That's not important right now!" She yelled, not even letting him finish.

Changing his gaze, Toothless dashed forward, skidding in front of Hiccup and leaning down, trying to meet eyes with the boy. "Hiccup!" He yelled, still not sure whether or not Hiccup could actually hear him, which was not possible, he might add. "Snap out of it, Hiccup!"

"Snap out of it!" Mistyeyes muttered to herself, looking down at the ground thoughtfully.

Toothless ignored her. "Hiccup, listen to me!" He yelled in the boy's ear, Hiccup still refusing to look up from the ground. "Hiccup!" He whirled around, looking over at Mistyeyes desperately. He didn't want to grab Hiccup and startle him more, he had no idea what was wrong in the first place! "What do we do?" He demanded helplessly, not all that worried that he was asking for help from her.

She looked up, eyes slightly narrowed as she looked over at Hiccup. "You know!" She said, voice casual. "I don't know."

Toothless deadpanned. "That is the best you can do?" He demanded.

She gave him a sharp look, Toothless relaxing as he realized what she was doing. Straightening, Mistyeyes turned, tail lashing. "I'm

leaving." She sniffed, tilting her chin to the air. "C'mon, Toothless, let him stay here. It's what he wants. You wouldn't make him do anything, right?"

Toothless flicked his ears. "I guess not." He said, getting to his feet and padding after her.

Hiccup blinked, eyes still trained on the ground. Footsteps echoing away signaled the dragons' leave. He waited, the silence in the forest pushing down on him. He didn't want to be alone, the thought made him lift his head slightly, peering over his knees. Nothing was there. "Wait" He said softly, voice strained as he lifted it a little higher. "I want-" He broke off, wincing as his head rang in pain.

"It's okay" The voice said reassuringly. "I'm still-"

Hiccup yelled loudly as something slammed into him, knocking him to the ground face-first. Whirling around on his back, Hiccup looked up to see Toothless standing over him. The dragon was keeping him on the ground, but was balancing his weight so that Hiccup didn't have to bear any of it. He didn't say anything, Mistyeyes watching anxiously behind him. Looking down, Toothless's gaze bore into Hiccup's, the dragon's breath the only noise in the forest clearing.

Hiccup stared into the dragon's gaze, his head clearing little by little, intelligence leaking back into his own eyes as he looked on. Toothless noticed this, not even blinking as he slowly curled his wings forward, wrapping them around the two as he closed off the rest of the forest from Hiccup's view, keeping it only on him.

The two stayed like that, green eyes locking with green. One gaze willing and earnest, the other slowly focusing, slowly coming back from the fog and back into reality.

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â€•

A/N: Sorry~ This took a while to type. Once again, my sister wants on! *boos*

ANYWAY: I have to go studyâ€•.*scurries away*

If only Hiccup knew Shadowclaw beat him to it XP

13. Chapter 13

A/N: I never wished you all happy Easter! What a shame, I am so sorry. What did you all get? :D

Dear HamsterJellyMan: I lurve you o-oâ€•AND YEAH! I love the Kingdom Hearts game, although I'm sad cause I'm almost done with it. I'm thinking of making a KH fanfic, you think I could pull it off?
XP

Dear Fanfic Reader: You should probably read the first one first XDD
^^,,

â€• â€• â€• â€• â€• â€• â€•

Mistyeyes was on-edge, ears flattened as she looked on nervously. She wasn't sure what to do, whether or not she should do anything at all really. She looked around the clearing, as if there would be an answer there, but there wasn't anything. Toothless wasn't even aware of her presence anymore, the dragon's back to her, she had no idea what was going on. Couldn't she have helped? Toothless didn't even tell her what he was doing before he shot out of the bushes. If he had just given her a few more minutes, she could have figured something out.

Something that didn't involve slamming into Hiccup and pinning him down on the ground.

"Toothless, what're you-" She snapped her mouth shut, as Toothless cut her off with a sharp mumble, quiet and loud at the same time as she blinked rapidly. He didn't even look back at her. Fluttering her wings angrily, she pressed forward. "But if you just let me-" He cut her off again. She narrowed her eyes angrily. "Can you just let me-"

"Mistyeyes, be quiet!" Toothless snapped, breaking his stare for a millisecond as he whirled back quickly to glare at her. The female blinked, drawing back at the sudden anger lighting in his eyes. "Can you just listen to me for a minute without saying that would do it better?" Mistyeyes's eyes narrowed slightly, stung a little. He whipped back around. "I think I know what's going on, butâ€|it's just a hunch. Just- be quiet."

"Well as long as I'm not an inanimate object." She growled under her breath, glaring daggers at the male dragon's back. If Toothless heard her, he showed no sign of doing so. He didn't even twitch. Glancing around, Mistyeyes settled down on the ground, curling her tail around herself tightly as she looked on absent-mindedly. How long would this take, anyway? It's been a minute. What was even wrong, anyway? Whatever Toothless thought it was, it wasn't any laughing matter.

But it looked like he knew what he was doingâ€|

Mistyeyes perked her ears, starting as she raised her head, craning it to look behind her. Ears straining, Mistyeyes blinked rapidly, sure that she had heard a noise back in the forest. A rustle, that had been what it was. Looking back over at Toothless, she opened her mouth to say something, then shut it with a snap. She'd better not bother him, it probably wasn't anything anyway. But she wasn't about to let it slip; it was much better to be safe than sorry.

Getting up quietly, Mistyeyes turned, bounding into the forest without a passing glance, ears still perked as she tried to remember where the noise had come from. It came from the right, it was retreating. That was it. Giving a nod of affirmation, Mistyeyes took off from the ground, shooting forward and breaking into a brisk trot as she sniffed at the passing foliage. The small section of the forest that didn't get charred by the fire still stank of smoke, Mistyeyes immediately drawing back with a disgusted look, tongue hanging out slightly.

Shaking her head to clear it, Mistyeyes lifted her head, scanning the

area around her intently. "Hello?" She called out softly, her voice seeming much louder in the silence of the forest. Flicking her ears back and forth, Mistyeyes shrugged. The dragon turned, ready to head back, when she heard the rustle again, freezing as soon as the noise reached her eardrums. Blue eyes flashing, she called out once more. "Hello?" When she got no response, she gritted her teeth together tightly. "If there's somebody out there, you might as well come out!" She snapped irritably. "There's no sense in hiding if I can hear you tromping around the forest."

Suddenly, she thought back to Hiccup, her irritation fading away to be replaced by a nagging sense of doubt. Whatever did that to Hiccup could be the thing she was stalking, and she didn't even think to think about it when she came out here. Ears flicking, Mistyeyes backed away slightly, suddenly more nervous than when she watched Hiccup yelling on the ground. Blue eyes clouded with trouble, they darted this way and that, searching the landscape around her frantically.

She froze as she heard another snap, tail sticking out immediately. "Toothless?" She called, a hoarse whisper by now. "Is that you?" A faint rumbling noise made her stiffen, eyes widening at once. Jerking into motion, Mistyeyes whirled around, frantic feet throwing up stray ash and making a large cloud in the air. Shooting off faster than when she left, Mistyeyes hared back to the clearing where she left Toothless and Hiccup. Heart switching places with her stomach, Mistyeyes ran faster than she's ever ran before, not at all sure why the small noise had put so much fear into her.

With the recent events that had taken place, Mistyeyes didn't feel like taking a chance. She didn't feel like getting caught by something she still couldn't explain. She should have stuck close to the group, she should have stuck close to Toothless. And yet all that had set her off had been one little twig, snapping in the night silence.

[illegible]

Waiting until Mistyeyes faded from view, the form behind the bush straightened, green eyes glinting in the night. Nightflight hummed crossly under her breath, eyes slightly dark as she looked after Mistyeyes with a small hint of anger. This was the most that the young female could take, then? A little snap in the night and she turned running, tail between her legs? It wasn't as if she had threatened the dragon, she had actually been looking for a way off of the island.

So that was what Toothless looked for in a friend? Somebody small and weak, somebody who needed protecting? Somebody who needed to be looked after? Somebody who was too afraid to hold their own weight, and fight alongside him? That was all that Mistyeyes was, somebody who was too small and weak to even stay in their pack on her own anyway! She was stronger than Mistyeyes, she was nearly three times as strong! Not to mention more brave and capable than the other dragon!

The female sighed through her nose, eyes suddenly going a little misty as she looked down at her feet. Her ears flattened to her head, and without even knowing it, she let out a small noise, curling her

tail tighter over herself. She didn't understand. She didn't understand at all. What had she done that was wrong? What had she done to make Toothless leave in the first place? He could have stayed in the tunnels with her, and they would have been living together at this very moment, running through the tunnels expertly.

"Now look where we are." She whispered, lifting her head and looking up at where Mistyeyes had vanished. Digging her claws into the ground, she repeated herself firmly in her head, refusing to think different. "No." She growled angrily, fury rising up inside her enough to make her lift her head and scream. "It wasn't my fault, I did nothing wrong." Lifting her head once more, she narrowed her eyes into furious slits. "It wasn't my fault at all."

She heard something behind her approaching, but she ignored it rudely. "It was never my fault, no matter what anybody else thought. It's the humans' fault. If they had stayed on their island, Toothless would still be with me." Drawing herself up, Nightflight hummed under her breath once more before she spoke again. "Well, I'll show them." She vowed darkly. "I'll show every last one of them. They'll see. They'll regret the day they ruined my life, and I'll make sure that I ruin theirs, permanently."

"And how will you go about doing that, again?" A voice asked from behind her.

Chuckling softly, Nightflight turned, smiling in a much sicklier way than Toothless's charming smile. "Easy, Fleetfoot. A youngling's question, of course." The dragon flicked his ear, trying to decide whether or not that was an insult. Nightflight went on steadily, not paying attention to the other dragon's movement. "I'll make them pay of course. Pay for everything. The lives lost in the Night Fury pack because of them - all of the dragon's deaths that the humans took, really. I'll make them regret the day that they crossed my path."

Raising her paw, Nightflight let out another low laugh. Sliding her claws out slowly, she watched almost disinterestedly as they glinted evilly in the moonlight. Fleetfoot watched carefully, paws tucking tight to his chest as he looked at the female dragon cautiously. Sensing his uneasiness, Nightflight lowered her paw with a thump on the ground, rolling her eyes bad-temperedly. "Oh, calm down, Fleetfoot." She growled, getting to her feet with a sweep of her tail.

She had recovered from her recent sadness, her old hard self replacing her so quickly that it almost made Fleetfoot's head spin. The dragoness fixed her cold gaze on him, gesturing for him to move with a rude flick of her paw. Scrambling to the side, Fleetfoot made way for her, the dragoness padding away to the edge of the island. "Let's go prepare. I'm ready to get off this stinking island." She said, ending her sentence on a disgusted note. "It stinks like humans."

"Right. The others went on ahead, we'll have to meet them at the island." He offered.

"Obviously." Nightflight muttered, rolling her eyes yet again. It seemed as though everything was getting on her nerves tonight, big or small. Reaching the edge of the forest, Nightflight closed her eyes,

breathing in deeply as the sea-salt wind blasted back into her face. "I could get used to this breeze, though." She remarked with an unusually happy tinge to her voice. "Perhaps we shouldn't burn down the **WHOLE** place. It would make the perfect new island for the Night Furies to rule, don't you think?" She mused, a sly smile working on her face.

"Of course." Fleetfoot said immediately. The male unfurled his wings, picking up into the air and starting to fly back the way the Night Furies had come. When he realized that Nightflight was not following, he hung back, taking to hovering in the air as he looked over his shoulder at her, almost quizzically. The dragoness's head was craned back to look into the forest, gaze intense and unwavering as she did so. She was still, as though thinking hard.

Right when Fleetfoot was about to swoop back down to her, she spoke, her words drifting up so that he could hear her slightly. Although her words were lost on him, as most were. The dragoness's voice held a sense of humor, something that he didn't usually associate with her. "Be prepared, little human." She rasped softly. "I will have my vengeance. You might have slipped through my claws once, but I assure you, that isn't going to happen again."

Pausing for a moment, Nightflight turned, giving a nod to Fleetfoot and swooping up into the sky. Without waiting for him, she shot past, her wings a small blur in the sky as she careened through the air. Jerking, Fleetfoot followed after a little clumsily, pushing himself as he pulled up next to her. "What are we going to do when we get back to the island?" Fleetfoot gasped.

Nightflight looked over at him. "Honestly, Fleetfoot." She sighed, not even out of breath despite how fast she was flying. "Do you always have to know everything? Isn't it better to take things as they come?" Fleetfoot blinked, caught off-guard at the random question. But Nightflight merely looked away, dipping over to the side and twirling in the air. Fleetfoot watched her, not even blinking as he watched her. Nightflight pretended not to notice, quickening her wing pace as she pulled ahead of Fleetfoot. "C'mon!" She shouted back. "We don't have all night for you to laze around. We have things to do."

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Hiccup blinked rapidly, looking around slowly, forehead creasing with confusion. "â€|okay." He said slowly, gathering where he was and what was going on rapidly and clumsily. He jerked in surprise, just now noticing Toothless standing over him, eyes wide and anxious. Eyes widening, Hiccup flattened himself to the ground, dirt and ash already sticking to his back with an uncomfortable feeling.

"What-!"

Toothless blinked, eyes still searching Hiccup's own. "Okay, get off please." Hiccup said uncomfortably, reaching up and flattening his hands against Toothless's chest and trying to get the dragon to budge off of him. "C'mon, Toothless. You're going to flatten me." The dragon blinked, as though startled by something that Hiccup couldn't understand.

Scrambling slightly, Toothless got off of Hiccup like the human had

asked, green eyes still wide with something close to fear. Blowing out a breath of air, Hiccup pushed himself up, starting to shake off some of the dirt that stuck tightly onto his shirt, when he faltered. He winced as a slight pain rang in his head, from sitting up so quickly or something. "Ouch." He muttered thickly, gritting his teeth together tightly.

Raising one of his hands, he raised it to press it against the side of his temple, squeezing his eyes shut. "That was weird." He muttered, letting his hand fall back to the ground with a thump. When he opened his eyes again, Hiccup blinked, Toothless watching anxiously. It was almost like Toothless was an owl now, a mix of an owl and a vulture that was. "What?" He asked, louder this time.

"Wait- how did I?" Hiccup blinked, trying to remember what happened in the last eight minutes. He didn't remember Toothless pinning him down to the ground (much less knew WHY). He didn't remember being flattened to the ground, and he didn't remember anything that led up to this moment. He had been looking for Ludiâ€|that was all it had been. So why was he suddenly on the ground? "You must be pretty fast." He muttered, eyeing Toothless weirdly. The dragon didn't reply, eyes still looking Hiccup up and down. "Is anything wrong, Toothless?" He asked, on-edge by now.

Suddenly a loud howl cut Hiccup off, the boy blinking rapidly as he looked towards the noise. Suddenly, Mistyeyes crashed through the rim of trees, eyes wide and frightened. "That was so scary! Toothless, I think something is back there!" She howled, Hiccup immediately losing all sense of humor he might have hinted at before as he shut his mouth. He looked down at the ground, one arm going over and gripping his arm. Toothless noticed the change, glancing back at him quizzically.

He didn't know what to do. Was he imagining this talk? He couldn't remember understanding Toothless or any other dragons at all before now. Sure, he could connect with Toothless and NEARLY understand what the dragon meant to sayâ€|but to hear a voice? To hear the words strung out in front of him? It wasn't right. No other Vikings said that they could hear their dragonsâ€|was something wrong with him? Should he ask the Elder about it?

"Okay, I'll go look." Toothless said, a little regretfully as he looked back at Hiccup.

"No, you have to stay!" Mistyeyes nearly whined. "What if it gets you too?"

"That won't happen." Toothless said irritably. "I promise. Take Hiccup back to the village and make sure he gets home. Find Shadowclaw and tell him to show you to the house. Stay there until I come back." He eyed her angrily. "And I mean STAY. I didn't even know that you left the clearing, which was STUPID."

Mistyeyes sniffed disdainfully, not replying as she watched him get to his feet. Toothless still kept his eyes on Hiccup. "Make sure he's safe." He said, softer by now. "I don't want anything bad happening to him."

"And I do?" Mistyeyes questioned.

"Just do it, please." Toothless murmured, looking from the boy to the dragon. "I'll be quick." And with that, the dragon spun and raced off, not at all worried about what lie ahead, it seemed. Mistyeyes watched for a moment before looking back over at Hiccup, confusion in her gaze. Hiccup met her eyes shyly, obviously aware of the reason for the awkwardness. He had been stupid, not thinking, and replied to Mistyeyes.

Whether or not he actually heard her, it still would have been weird for him to say something like that. Mistyeyes thought he was an idiot, and he probably was, for thinking that dragons were talking. But Mistyeyes curled her tail, recovering over the odd moment as she smiled warmly. "Let's get back to the village, everything will be okay." She purred, getting up and padding away slowly, waiting for him to follow.

Hiccup blinked rapidly. Was she talking directly to him? So was he imagining it, or not? He shook his head to clear it, returning the smile and putting himself into motion, following the other dragon with sure steps this time. Even though Mistyeyes had only been here for a short time, Hiccup thought that she would fit into Berk perfectly. She might not be used to the Viking custom, but she would get used to it, just like Toothless had.

But, of course, even if it didn't, it would be fine too.

After all, here he was thinking he was talking to dragons.

[illegible]

A/N: My sister isâ€ wait for itâ€. You'll never guessâ€ KICKING ME OFF! :D

I really wanted to get this chapter out so that you understood Nightflight a little more.

Hope you like, and I'm sorry for the slow updates, I really am. Kingdom Hearts is swallowing me up! But I'm almost done with the game, then I'll be all over this site X3

14. Chapter 14

A/N: I'm soooo sorry for the long break, guys. : (

I didn't do it on purpose, really I didn't. I've been busy with school stuff and all things in that way. I would have had time to update last weekend, but it seems as though I had plans. I went to Anime Saint Louis as Hiccup ;)

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Wind rushed backwards, slapping gently across the young dragon's cheeks as she opened her mouth into a large grin, drinking in the scents and the feel of the luxurious breeze. The young dragon's wings flapped in large bursts against her sides, the little dragon shooting through the clouds and the flocks of birds, her heart soaring just as

fast as she was. Green eyes wild with excitement, the youngling lifted her head, shooting up and twisting in wide circles to show off. "Beat that!" She yelled breathlessly, skidding to a stop in midair that was rather clumsy and blunt.

Turning around in a neat circle, the young dragon beamed at her comrade, the dragon hovering in the air a ways away from her. He was just as young as she, if not a little younger at that. Calculating green eyes were tracing the path that she had followed, a small spark of challenge already lighting in the depths of the orbs. "It would be easy." He teased, looking over at her with an almost smug look. It was as if he had already pulled off the feat of beating her own personal best.

Narrowing her eyes, the young she-dragon sniffed, turning her nose in the air. "Well then do it." She said fairly, looking back down at her friend. "Can't beat me till you do it. This'll decide who's the best flyer in the cave! You'd better pull off the bestest trick yet!" As if to emphasize her point, the youngling twisted in her hover, leaning backwards and doing a neat little back flip. It seemed everything about the youngling was neat. Perfect seeming to shine and radiate from every inch of her. At least that was how she made it seem, with her head held high each and every moment.

"Fine, I will." The male said off-handedly, giving a nod of affirmation. "But you'll regret it, 'cause there's gonna be a new flyer in the dens, and it sure isn't gonna be you!" And with that, the child shot up into the air, gone in an instant as his friend stared at the spot where he had vanished. Blinking rapidly, the girl looked up into the sky, finding her friend and giving a small gasp of admiration as she watched her friend turn circles in the air, showing off skills that were obviously far past his age.

Where had he learned to fly like that? The youngling snapped her mouth closed, realizing that it was hanging open. Locking her jaw back, the younger dragon tried to hold back a flash of jealousy for her friend as he started in his descent. Nose pointing straight down, the dragon folded his wings backwards, shooting down as quick as a flash of lightning, eyes narrowed against the wind. The girl let out a squeal as the dragon flashed by her, knocking her aside with the force of the wind as she regained her balance rapidly. Looking down with alarm, she watched as her friend started to near the ground dangerously, getting closer and closer with each moment.

Just as she was about to let out a yowl of alarm, the male suddenly jerked upwards, coming out of his descent with something close to ease. Flapping back up to her, the youngling noticed his smug expression with a flick of her ear. As her friend skidded to a heavy stop beside her, she kept her face blank, clear of emotion. "How was that?" The winded child demanded, face flushed as he looked at her earnestly. "Did I do great? That was awesome! Did you see me doing all those loops up there! That's the fastest I've ever come CLOSE to flying! Did you like it?"

"It was great." She said bluntly, looking him up and down. "But not better than me, of course." She added quickly, her friend's face falling as soon as she spoke it. "Nobody is better than me, especially you. You have to be older to be the number one best flyer. Everybody knows that."

"â€¦" The crestfallen dragon looked up at the sky, seeming lost for a moment, confused. But then he shook himself roughly, changing instead to glare angrily over at his friend. "That's not fair! And it's not true! You can't tell me that we're going to have a contest and then say that I wouldn't have won it anyway! That's not fair!" Pausing for a moment, he waited for her to say something. When she only glared at him, he added. "You're being mean."

"Nuh-uh." The female sniffed. "I'm being FAIR."

"Nuh-uh!" The male puffed up. Blinking, he looked over his shoulder for a moment, whirling back around with a scowl on his face. "You aren't fun anymore. I'm leaving. You're just jealous of me." Copying her, he stuck his nose into the air, whirling around and shooting away from her, quick as he had first started in his display of flying. He headed back the cave, not even glancing back at her as he flew away in a huff.

"æ|Wait!" The little youngling shouted suddenly, lurching into motion as she flapped her wings repeatedly against her sides. Propelling herself forward, the small Night Fury streaked after her friend, panting by now as she felt her energy level slowly draining little by little. "Slow down!" She yelled loudly, eyes narrowed with irritation as she floundered through the air after the fleeing form. But no matter how hard she flew, she couldn't reach the Night Fury. He was going too fast. "WAIT!" She yelled, louder this time. "SLOW DOWN, WILL YOU!"

Suddenly, her friend vanished altogether. Screeching to a stop, the little girl's eyes danced back and forth as she was jarred, blinking as she shook her head back and forth to clear it. "Hello?" She called out, her voice seemed small now as she spoke. Looking around, she realized with panic that she didn't recognize the place where she was. Long trees stretched out like claws, the moon overhead like a claw mark in the dense black sky overhead.

Panicking, the small dragon landed with an unsteady thud on the ground, pushing herself up with wide green eyes. "Hello?" She called out once more, voice getting a little bit shaky by now. Whirling around in a full circle, the little dragon looked back and forth in a frenzy. "Where are you?" She called out loudly, tail lashing across the leaf-strewn ground with a strange rustling noise that seemed to be amplified in the darkness. "Tell me where you went! It's not funny!" She called, her voice cracking as she winced slightly. There was no answer from her friend. "Seriously." She added, childishly.

Glancing around, the small child slowly flattened herself to the ground, ears slicking back to her head as she looked forward with wide eyes. Curling into a tight ball, the small dragon closed her eyes tightly, curling her tail around her form as if it would help her. Ducking her head down close, the small dragon tucked her nose underneath her paws, eyes closed so tight, she thought that the eyelids would rip into two pieces.

Letting out a small whimper, the dragon opened her eyes a crack. "Come back." She whispered into the dark.

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"What're you doing?" The voice started Toothless into jumping nearly a foot off the ground, the dragon whirling around in heartbeat, claws sliding out to gouge into the ground. Mistyeyes stiffened with alarm, eyes wide as she looked at him like he was crazy. Taking a stride backwards, Mistyeyes looked him up and down. "What?" She asked in alarm, unable to hide in the slightest bit her surprise.

Blinking rapidly, Toothless drew back his claws, straightening a little self-consciously. "Sorry." He huffed ungraciously, ear flicking to the side as he looked at her apologetically. "I wasn't expecting anybody else out here." Sitting back down, Toothless turned his back on her, looking back down the ridge where Hiccup was trying to help in rebuilding the blacksmith's. Mind you, that building got the worst of the damage. But already, Hiccup had been knocked aside by Gobber hitting him with a board of wood, and he nearly gave himself a third degree burn by trying to handle the coals that were coming in.

Hesitating for a moment, Mistyeyes took a deep breath, walking forward and settling down a ways away from Toothless. She made sure they weren't touching in any way possible. Giving a small sigh, she looked down to the mess that was Hiccup trying to help. "He isn't like most Vikings, is he?" She asked finally, being the first to speak as she broke through the awkward silence. Toothless looked over at her quickly, but her gaze only showed curiosity as she looked down at the human.

Looking back, Toothless waited a moment before he found himself replying. "No. No he's not."

"I think it's a good thing." Mistyeyes said softly, eyes strangely soft as she let a small smile cross over her face. Toothless looked over at her strangely, tail twitching slightly. Catching the movement, Mistyeyes started, looking over at him as she scooted away. "I mean- being the same is no fun, right?" She searched his eyes, desperately hoping that he would say yes. If he said no, it wouldn't help the tension that was fizzling between them like static.

"I guess not." Toothless said eventually, a wave of relief going through Mistyeyes.

Silence registered for a long beat of silence, Mistyeyes closing her eyes as she cursed herself mentally. Shuffling her paws on the ground, she scuffed up some ash that rose in a cloud around her, Toothless scooting even farther away from her as some of the smoke got onto him. Blinking rapidly, Mistyeyes stiffened at the movement, every single thing that Toothless did surprised her. It made her think like she did something wrong. Rolling her eyes to the side, Mistyeyes turned her head away swiftly, glaring at the ground.

"I know you hate me." She said quietly, Toothless's ears perking at her words. Blue eyes dull, she looked at her paws angrily. "You hate me for what I made you do back with the Night Furies. And to be honestâ€¦ maybe I hate myself for doing that too. But if you don't ever let me make up for that, you're always going to just be some dragon that never lets go of grudges. I know it isn't such a really good apology for you, and I know that you deserve more than it, but I wasn't the same dragon back then. I didn't know that any ofâ€¦ thisâ€¦ was possible." She lifted her tail as she gestured around

to the village around her. Toothless followed her tail, green eyes thoughtful as he looked at the back of her head. "After all, you were in my place one time too, don't forget that."

The thought made Toothless blink once. Turning around, Mistyeyes looked at him steadily, blue eyes suddenly unflinching as she met his gaze. When he didn't say anything, she broke the eye contact, giving a heavy sigh as she stood, turning around and starting back from where she had come from. Toothless suspected that it was wherever Shadowclaw was, the youngling couldn't get enough of Mistyeyes recently. The thought sent a small prick of jealousy through him, but he pushed it away.

"Mistyeyes." He said suddenly, hearing the female halt behind him. "In the forest with Hiccup. You made it sound like he could hear you." Turning around, he saw the dragon's eyes slightly glazed with confusion. Her tail twitched though her gaze clearing as she realized what he was talking about. "You know that humans can't understand dragons, right?" Even if the female appeared a little short-sighted, she couldn't be that naive, right?

The female did not reply, seeming a little taken aback by his words. Shaking her head slightly, the dragon looked back down at Hiccup. "Maybe normal humans can't." She mumbled, the words barley reaching Toothless's own ears. The dragon straightened a little, looking at her a little more expectantly as he waited more obviously. Tail lashing, Mistyeyes shot him a look. "You talked to him too." She retorted sharply. "Are you some kind of hypocrite now?"

Toothless fought down a flash of irritation at her words. Pushing it down swiftly, he took in a deep breath, repeating to himself over and over that he had to be patient with her. His patience always ran thin with her, it seemed. Ever since she had made it apparent she was staying at least. The two couldn't have a single conversation without diving into an argument. "Of course I did. But I didn't expect an answer. You on the other paw, looked like you wanted a REPLY from him."

She shrugged. "Maybe I was." She said evenly, looking at him like he was stupid once more.

"So that's what I'm trying to ask you about." Toothless managed through clenched teeth. How stupid could she act? Somebody like this wouldn't have been able to become leader of the old Night Fury Pack, surely? "You can't even answer a simple question, can you?" Mistyeyes blinked, even more speechless as she looked at Toothless quizzically. "How could somebody like you-" He stopped himself at once, snapping his jaws shut with a snap.

Immediately, her eyes narrowed into angered slits. "Somebody like me WHAT?" She demanded, taking a step closer. "Go on, finish your sentence."

Toothless only glared at her, green eyes narrowed as she came closer.

Letting out a growl, Mistyeyes exploded all over him. "You know what you are? Selfish! All you can think about is yourself, and right after I apologize to you, you go and make it sound like something else entirely! I was trying to make sure that we could be something

other than enemies, but you seem to be fixed on being that, huh? All you care about is whatever is going with you and Nightflight! You don't care about what I know, and you don't even care about Hiccup!"

She had gone too far this time. Letting out a roar, he leapt to his feet, towering over her angrily. Green eyes burning with rage, he took an advancing step closer, the female immediately scuttling backwards. "Don't you DARE say anything like that ever again!" Toothless screeched, raging as loud as he could, Mistyeyes's eyes wide. "Of course I care about Hiccup! He's my human, and I've known him a lot longer than you! If you think you can come here and be the expert on everything, you had better rethink that, because I can ASSURE you that is not the way it works around here!"

Instead of backing away, Mistyeyes's advanced, catching Toothless off-guard as she threw her face into Toothless's own. "Then why don't you notice the way Hiccup's face changes whenever one of us talk?" She pressed, satisfaction welling up inside her as Toothless drew back slightly. "You haven't noticed, have you?" Whipping around, she stalked away with heavy footsteps. "That's what I thought."

Leaving Toothless alone, the dragon stared at the ground for a moment, thinking about what Mistyeyes had said. Twisting his head around, Toothless looked back down into the gully. Hiccup was actually the one racing for him, though a little unsteadily. He must have been startled by the commotion, eyes wide and questioning as he came closer to Toothless. The Night Fury waited, green eyes piercing into Hiccup's own as the boy came to a stop in front of him, Toothless reaching out and steadying the boy as he wobbled back and forth.

"What was that for? What was going on?" Hiccup asked, looking over and watching with a wrinkled nose as Mistyeyes turned the corner of a building, vanishing from sight. Amid the working Vikings and running toddlers, she was gone in an instant. It would take a while more to find her, that much was certain. Looking back at Toothless, Hiccup looked him up and down. "What was that all about?" He asked in bewilderment.

"She was being unreasonable." Toothless grumbled to himself, looking at the ground dejectedly.

"That's not an excuse." Hiccup murmured, turning back and looking where she had gone.

Toothless sat there for a moment, seeming too focused on thinking before he realized what had just happened. Eyes widening and pupils dilating, the dragon turned quickly, looking at Hiccup like the boy was an alien thing. But the Viking was too busy looking after Mistyeyes with a sad expression. "Hiccup?" He asked, voice small but still containing the same amount of surprise.

Hiccup turned his head a fraction of an inch, still looking where Mistyeyes had walked away.

"Can you hear me?" Toothless asked in a small whisper.

Suddenly, Hiccup winced, jumping slightly as he reached a hand up to the left side of his head, grimacing. "Ouch." He grumbled softly,

rubbing his temple with a pained expression. "My head hurts!" Blinking rapidly to clear his fuzzy mind, Hiccup let his hand slap to his side. "Let's go find Mistyeyes, you have to apologize." Before Toothless could do anything, Hiccup marched forward, the strange and sudden headache slipping his mind as he made his way forward.

Looking after his human, Toothless flattened his ears. "If you can hear me, stop walking." He said loudly, a little too loudly.

And wouldn't you know it. Hiccup stopped, turning around and giving Toothless a smile. When the dragon looked at him with wide eyes, Hiccup pointed ahead. "Come on, let's go get her!" He said encouragingly.

This time, Toothless didn't object.

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A/N: Sorry for the short chapter. Had to cut it short.

I hope I get a lot of reviews! I missed hearing from yall!

15. Chapter 15

A/N: Did you all miss me! :D

Well€I missed you all~ And I really am sorry for the slow updates, it might have to stay like this, with not-as-quick updates for you all. : (I feel bad, but life slammed into me ONCE more. (Band being my life) Soooo, I don't really have a choice in that. I wish I did though, I don't like band very much at all, trust me XD

And thank you to the person who stood up for me, I'm not sure who it was ^^

Made me want to update~! :D

â€| SHOULD Hiccup be able to hear Ludiâ€|.?

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The blacksmith's was almost all the way rebuilt, even though it had only been a short time since the attack. After all, with generations of house making, it wasn't all that surprising, really. The other houses proved to be more difficult, but the Blacksmith's didn't really need much in it. So far, most of the equipment was inside already, the order for more weapons and shields proving more important than the need for houses. With the threat of an impending attack once more, houses could wait. A few of the homes went a little less touched than the others, maybe wood crumbling off the side, but that was it. The families in need were staying there for the time being. Everyone else was tending to the village.

Having had practice staying quiet and observing, Hiccup watched the village go through these actions as he did his best to make decent swords as quickly as he could manage. Gobber was helping crafting the

houses, something that Hiccup didn't even bother to try and help out with. He knew that it wouldn't turn out very pretty if he attempting to make a house. He was much better at swords, in the middle of blowing air among the burning coals to make the sword easier to bend. Forehead slightly wrinkled with concentration, Hiccup tried to block out the thing that was distracting him the most right now.

But still, Hiccup could see Toothless out of the corner of his eye, the Night Fury sitting at the entrance of the Blacksmith's with a quizzical expression on his face. It was obvious that the dragon was confused, and yet the thought only made irritation spark inside Hiccup, something that was slightly out of character for him. If the dragon thought he was confused, then he should think about what Hiccup felt, huh? Picking up the sword carefully and putting it out on the table, Hiccup turned his back pointedly to Toothless, trying to get the message across that he wanted to be alone right now. But not sound was made, which meant that Toothless was still refusing to leave.

Eye twitching, Hiccup shook his head in attempt to clear it, blowing out his cheeks as he looked back down at the sword. It was all that mattered right now. Tongue sticking out slightly in concentration, Hiccup took a hammer and started to rain blows down on the sword, putting all the force he could manage into his swings. He needed to get it flat, otherwise the other villagers would have his head. It was one time, and it would certainly be his last.

He couldn't concentrate at all. Hammering in the wrong place, Hiccup winced at the small dent that the hammer had caused, cursing himself mentally. Bending down low, Hiccup blinked, trying to figure out how he was going to fix his error. But a voice on the other side of the village made him perk up, straightening as he peered out the small thing that was supposed to be a window. It had to be worked on before Hiccup would dare try and call it a window.

Forgetting the burning sword for a moment, Hiccup pressed his face against the wall, trying to see out of the small gap in the wall. He could have built a better window. A group of kids were standing near the Blacksmith's stall, complaining quite loudly to each other, being obnoxious and making the adults roll their eyes to one another as they passed the group. "I'm bored!" One little boy complained, stomping his foot down on the ground with a thump. "There's nothing to do!"

"We could play tag." One girl suggested with a smile on her face.

"They already told us we can't get in each other's way." The boy said with a scowl. Glaring down at the ground, he added bitterly. "And you guys never play that right anyway. You guys think there's a base." Blinking, he looked back up at the others, who were all looking at him oddly. "Well, there isn't one." He added childishly.

"We could play hide and seek." Another tried.

"Where?" The first boy demanded, crossing his arms. "The whole village is destroyed."

"You're just a downer."

"Am not!"

"Why don't you guys go and help somebody out?" Another person spoke. The other started at the new voice, turning and looking back. Craning his head to the side, Hiccup caught sight of a girl with long brown hair and green eyes. The Viking was carrying an infant, helping out the mother in watching the thing, who was walking a few steps ahead of her. Glancing around, at the houses being built and the pathways torn up to be built once more. "â€|Why not go help Hiccup?" She asked, a smile on her face. "I'm sure you could help him put together some new furniture or maybe even make a few toys."

"â€|" The children looked back and forth at each other, faces blank and apathetic as they met each other's gazes. Silence reigned for a moment, the older girl shifting uneasily as she eyed the mother, who was almost over the ridge already. But she didn't move as she waited for their reply. Then finally, the smaller boy spoke up. "No." He said flatly. Perking up once more, the boy turned back to the others, a grin on his face. "Let's try to find Toothless!" He declared. "I think I saw him over there!"

"Hey." Hiccup lurched forward, slamming his forehead into the wall with a smack, staggering backwards and blinking rapidly as a voice sounded right behind him. Whirling around, Hiccup looked with wide eyes at Astrid, the girl looking at him quizzically where she stood. Eyeing him, the girl gave her the look that said: 'I forgot how odd you could get.' "What were you doing?" She asked, eyebrows raised as she looked at the hollow hole in the wall. "â€|Is that a window?"

"It's supposed to." Hiccup growled in response, spinning around stiffly and glaring down at the sword as he picked up his hammer once more, raising his arm and ramming it back down on the weapon with a lot more force than he needed. Astrid blinked, glancing behind her to where Toothless had once sat. But she narrowed her eyes in confusion as she realized the dragon was not there anymore.

"Hey, what's the matter?" She asked, pushing away the dragon from her mind as she turned back to Hiccup. Walking forward, the blonde tilted her head, a small frown on her face. "Is there something wrong? You seem angry." She eyed the sloppy-looking sword, knowing without a doubt in her mind that Hiccup had made much better-looking ones than that. Probably in his sleep, he could make better ones. "Is it Snotlout again?"

"No." Hiccup threw back, not even looking back over at her.

"Well there's got to be something wrong." Astrid said thinly, raising an eyebrow at him suspiciously. "If you won't tell me what's wrong, I'll find out anyway. There's really no choice, you know I'll find out anyway." When he didn't reply, she added once more. "And then Toothless will know what's wrong too. Then you'll never get anywhere without him bugging you."

"Astrid, can't you just leave me alone?" Hiccup demanded, dropping his hammer down with a slam as he stopped in his attempts to make the sword. Turning, he faced Astrid with a glare, crossing his arms across his chest angrily. "Can't you see that I just want to be alone? You're with me all the time, why don't you stop and go hang out with people that are worth spending time with, huh?"

"And since when are you not worth it?" Astrid asked, eyes widening.

Was that a flash in her eyes? Was she lying? Was he being paranoid? Hiccup's gaze hardened as he set his jaw back stubbornly. Of course he wasn't overeating. "Never mind. You wouldn't get it anyway." He snapped quickly. At Astrid's look, he huffed angrily. "I meanâ€¦justâ€¦I don't know. Go away Astrid, it's obvious you-"

"That I WHAT?" Astrid demanded, voice higher than usual as she put her hands in the air.

"That youâ€¦.that youâ€¦" Say it. He didn't want to, it was unfairâ€¦wasn't it? Of course it wasn't, he saw what the kids out there did. Who's to say that it wouldn't happen with anybody else in the village? It was probably going through everybody's mind here. He winced once more, before he blurted out the words, unable to keep it back anymore. "That you don't care about ME!" He accused, pointing at her like a child. Astrid started with surprise, mouth hanging open slightly as she glared at him. "You just care about what I DID!"

"What did you do!" Astrid asked, in just as loud a voice as his.

"With the Red Death! You didn't even LOOK at me before I did anything like that, but then when I had Toothless, THEN you decided that you liked me! It's not even me you like! If I didn't do anything like that, then I would still be the worthless person that you criticized every single day! If that didn't happen, you would only talk to me when you were FORCED to!"

"I cannot believe you are accusing me of this!" Astrid shouted, blue eyes wide as two twin moons.

"Why? Because you didn't think I would notice!" Hiccup asked expectantly, looking at Astrid like he had never seen her before. "You thought that I would just love the attention of a girl like you and just think I was the luckiest guy in the world? You thought I would feel so happy I would act like an idiot, right?"

"No!" She shouted. "I thought that you wouldn't stoop so low as the even THINK about it that way! I thought that you understood what happened, I didn't think that you would go all haywire and think something totally different!"

"Well, it failed." Hiccup snapped angrily, fuming as he balled his hands together. "I don't want you're company anymore, you didn't like me before, you didn't like me then. Same for everybody else! I was at the bottom of the totem pole, and I'm still hanging down there! So why don't you just go off and be with the other successful Vikings and leave me to wallow in self-pity like you did before!" Astrid blinked, hand flying up to cover her mouth as she took a small step backwards. "Just go, and you wont have to put up with me anymore."

"But-" Astrid gritted her teeth together, holding her hands tightly to her sides. "Hiccup, just-"

"Go away." Hiccup snapped, eyes narrowed. "Can't you see I figured you out?" When Astrid refused to move or say anything, he took a step towards her. "I don't want you around anymore!" He yelled loudly, Astrid jumping slightly at the sudden increase in volume. "Go away! Never talk to me again! I hate you!"

The girl shut her eyes tightly, spinning around and racing back outside into the village. Hiccup watched her go, his scowl still plastered on his face as he stood alone in the Blacksmith's. He saw other people look over at Astrid, eyes wide as they looked at the girl with bewilderment. Astrid never cried, and to see her doing that, it meant something big had to be wrong. For a moment, Hiccup felt a flash of guilt. But a small voice in his head made the feeling go away, to be replaced once more by anger.

"She deserved it."

[illegible]

Toothless was hiding someplace he hoped nobody would find him. After that group of children wanted to try and ride him, he had to find someplace to stay hidden. The thought of all of them crammed on his back made his lip curl, it wasn't like he handed out free rides all the time. But he straightened from his hiding spot when he heard rapid footsteps come his way, the dragon sitting up with perked ears just in time to see Astrid fly by him.

The girl didn't even glance over at him, and it was only when she had left, did Toothless realize that she had been crying. The dragon blinked, glancing over his shoulder after Astrid quizzically. Astrid crying? She never did that! What was going on? Thoughts immediately flashing to Hiccup, Toothless's eyes widened, the dragon letting out a snort as he turned, bunching himself up and readying for himself to leap forward back to the Blacksmith's.

But when he caught sight of Mistyeyes, Toothless stopped altogether, watching as the light gray Night Fury rushed up to him, blue eyes frantic. "There you are!" She exclaimed. "I've been looking everywhere for you! I-"

"Where's Hiccup?" Toothless demanded at once, cutting her off. "Is he okay?"

"â€|Y-Yeah." Mistyeyes stammered, confused as he looked back where she had come from. "He was in the Blacksmith's when I ran by, why? Is something wrong?" Toothless blinked, a wave of relief washing over him as he shook his head.

"No. But I need to go after a friend, I think something happenedâ€|she's not normally like this. I should go and check on her." Toothless got to his feet, turning and trotting away, giving a swish of his tail to Mistyeyes as a good-bye.

"Wait." Mistyeyes said haltingly.

Toothless blinked, stopping and turning around expectantly.

"This is pointless." Mistyeyes said bluntly. When Toothless didn't move, she lifted her tail, gesturing to the reconstructing village

around her. Toothless looked around as well, green eyes confused. "I mean- even if it does get rebuilt in two minutes, it won't stand a chance. Nightflight isn't going to stop at anything, Toothless, she's just going to keep coming back until we'reâ€¦" She trailed off, not finishing the sentence.

"You meanâ€¦you're implying that we would have to leave the island?" Toothless pressed.

"Even that wouldn't make a difference. She would find you even before you got five miles into sea." Mistyeyes said, quieter this time. Her blue eyes were downcast, feet scuffing the ground nervously as she mumbled. "I was going to tell you before this, butâ€¦I just couldn't find the right wordsâ€¦what to say."

"So you're telling me there isn't any hope?" Toothless asked, voice sharper now as he glared at her. "You're saying no matter what we do, we're all going to die because of something as stupid as a dragon not thinking right?"

"It's a whole COLONY that's not thinking right." Mistyeyes said, wounded.

"Well, it's YOUR colony." Toothless said scathingly, Astrid slipping his mind as he looked at Mistyeyes. "Why don't you get up there and take your place from Nightflight? Wouldn't that fix everything? Nobody is stopping you. If it will make her stop, go and take back your rightful spot!"

"I can't!" Mistyeyes yelled, closing her eyes. "They aren't who they used to be!"

"I don't think you're who you used to be." Toothless retorted.

"You aren't exactly who you used to be either, Toothless." Mistyeyes growled, angry now.

"And I'm glad about that. You on the other hand obviously don't belong here."

"So you're saying that I would never fit into Berk? That I should just leave?"

"Maybe that's what I want you to do." Toothless snarled.

Claws sliding out, Mistyeyes could have had steam shooting out of her ears. "I try to come here to help you, give up my place in the colony-"

"SEE! You can't play two sides, Mistyeyes!" Toothless pointed out. "Get on one side."

"I'm TRYING to be on your's." She growled under her breath.

"That's not working." Toothless laughed, his laughter dry and humorless.

"Can't you give me credit for tryingâ€¦" Mistyeyes sighed, shoulders sagging.

"Go back to your colony. You're not trying hard enough." Toothless snapped. "In Berk, we don't believe in giving up. You on the other hand, seem to be perfectly okay in the face of death. If you want to give up so bad, just go back to your colony and let them do whatever they want. You're not my problem. I have to take care of Hiccup, I have to figure out what's going on right now, I have to go find Astrid!"

"I don't have what it takes to go back there." Mistyeyes said, voice small. "I lost it. I got scared in the woods from a twig cracking. I got scared of the fire. I got scared of my own dragons, I don't know who they are anymore."

"Well, at least we agree on something." Toothless said shortly, getting back up and turning around.

"You make it sound like Hiccup is a child." Mistyeyes said, suddenly angry. "You don't have to watch him all the time! He can look after himself, you make him sound pathetic!"

"You have no idea what I have been through!" Toothless roared, whirling around to face her. Mistyeyes shrank backwards, eyes growing large at the yell. "You have no idea what it feels like for me to be around him! You have no idea how scared it gets me to look at Hiccup and see him not moving!" Mistyeyes tucked her wings close to her sides, ears lying flat back on her head. "I've seen him close to death two times already, both because I wasn't able to help him! One because I was the one that nearly got him killed! Don't tell me how to handle Hiccup, because you have no idea who he is! You've been with him for a week! That's nothing!"

"You don't have to-"

"But it's your fault too." Mistyeyes closed her eyes tightly at these words. "You were the one that made me do it. You were the one that FORCED me to attack him. You wouldn't take no for an answer. You or any other dragon in that cave."

"I didn't KNOW." Mistyeyes breathed.

"Well not I hope you regret it. I hope that when you do leave, you'll do it without looking back. Because you don't DESERVE to look back. We could make it five miles, and we could make it before you could say 'I was wrong.'" Toothless paused, looking her up and down before he added in a grave tone. "You're no different from Nightflight."

Ignoring the dragon's sharp intake, Toothless swung around, stalking away. His steps made loud thumps on the ground, his tail lashing back and forth in anger. Stalking away, Toothless tried to block out Mistyeyes from his head, focusing instead on Astrid and finding out what was wrong with the girl. But he doubted he would be able to get anywhere, he couldn't think straight now.

"Toothless." Mistyeyes said quietly. The dragon kept on walking. "Why do you still have the automatic tail? Why not the one Hiccup controlled?"

Closing his eyes, Toothless locked his jaw back, breaking into a sprint and leaving Mistyeyes in the dust. He had to think about

with Hiccup and Shadowclaw, she wasn't going to bail out on them. Getting to her feet, she felt determination sweep through her before she knew it. A plan formed in her mind, a plan that she hoped would open Toothless's eyes and make him sure that he knew where her loyalties lie. Standing still for a moment, Mistyeyes gave a small nod, turning stiffly and stalking away, picking up the pace.

"Everybody follow me!" Mistyeyes shouted as loud as she could, feet thumping on the ground with uneven beats. The cold wind lashed at her face, making her eyes water, but the dragon pelted through the camp as fast as she could, not even giving a passing glance at the dragons she flew by. "All the dragons follow me! I have a plan, but we have to work fast!" She saw Shadowclaw as she went, the smaller dragon's ears were flat and his eyes round and big as she looked at her. She didn't stop to ask what was troubling him.

The other dragons in the village looked at her skeptically as she passed them, the same confusion and hidden interest in their eyes as she observed her. But pretty soon, they all set down the work they were doing slowly, turning and picking up to match Mistyeyes's pace. It wasn't like the Night Fury had spoken to much of them at all in the days she had been here, most were just doing it to see if she actually spoke to others. The thought probably wasn't true in its own right, but nonetheless.

Coming to the edge of the village where the camp met with the woods, Mistyeyes skidded to a clumsy halt, feet kicking up dust and ash that she immediately spat out rapidly. Flattening her ears self-consciously, she turned to face the crowd of dragons waiting in front of her, eyes flying open as she saw that nearly every dragon in the village was in front of her. Shifting uneasily, Mistyeyes frantically tried to remember what she was going to say. She hadn't expected this many to follow her. She should have thought this through more, she guessed. Cursing herself mentally, Mistyeyes fought the urge to stomp on the ground with frustration.

It was a Nadder who spoke up first, the Nadder of the girl that Hiccup was friends with. "Are you going to say anything or did I follow you all the way over here for nothing?" She questioned, her voice tinged with impatience and annoyance. The other dragons murmured agreement, looks of expectancy and irritation meeting Mistyeyes's own troubled one. The dragon shook herself mentally, sucking in a deep breath and blowing it out roughly. In the crowd, she caught sight of Shadowclaw sitting neatly. The youngling was looking up at her with a look something close to admiration. On his head, Ludi was perched, the cat having no trouble in balancing on top of the smaller dragon's temple. The cat flicked her ears, as if she knew exactly what was going on. Looking at Shadowclaw's blazing eyes, Mistyeyes remembered what it was like to speak in front of a large group of dragons, her familiar senses of leadership rushing back to her.

Puffing out her chest slightly, Mistyeyes took a step forward, blue eyes becoming piercing and bold. Gaze sweeping over the group in front of her, she raised her voice, making sure that it traveled well over the sea of eyes that were now trained on her. "I have something I want to share with you all." She said, starting with the obvious. "You all know that I came from the pack of Night Furies that are now attacking and threatening your home." Some glares she got from that

sentence, but she ignored them swiftly. "I came here to help this village to get away from that threat, and I realized that I have been neglecting that as I came here." She paused for a moment, looking down at the ground. "I suppose I got distracted by a few things in coming here."

She jarred herself out of her thoughts. "Anyway." She said stiffly. "Nightflight and Fleetfoot are the two main dragons that are leading this pack. If we take them out first, the others will have no reason to keep fighting. But that's for later plans. Right now we need to do something more for the village besides rebuilding it. That should not be the main priority right now. The main priority is protecting the island altogether. With the humans out and fighting anyway during the raids, buildings aren't a necessity." She hesitated, marking out plans in her head.

"So what do we do?" The Nadder asked, the hostility slowly melting off of her voice. Her head was tilted to the side, ears erect and straining, drinking up every word that Mistyeyes was saying. The Night Fury looked at her, blinking. What was the Nadder's name again? Stormfly. She had caught her talking to Toothless on occasion. Mistyeyes wondered if Toothless and Stormfly were as close as Astrid and Hiccup were, and she was confused to feel a flash of heat rush through her at the thought of them talking together.

"We have to make a plan." She said bluntly, once more stating the obvious. "We need to find a way to make the island more protected altogether. Make it harder for the other Night Furies to get close to it." Out of the corner of her eye, Mistyeyes spotted movement. Turning, the dragon was slightly surprised to see Hiccup standing at the edge of the clearing, no doubt attracted by the noise they were making. The boy seemed out of place as usual, one arm gripping the other across his chest as he stood and watched. The sight of him made Mistyeyes remember the other part. "And the humans that are too young or too old. We don't want to risk them, we have to find a way to lead them away from the village."

"What's the point of this! Will it even do anything?" A dragon's voice echoed over to her from where she stood, the owner of the voice staying hidden from her in the crowd. Mistyeyes arched up, straining to see above the other dragons, but she let out a frustrated snort as she couldn't do it. Locking her jaw back tightly, Mistyeyes felt her anger rise for an unknown reason.

"Will it do anything?" She repeated, almost in disbelief. "So you think that it WILL do anything if you just take the attacks like you've been doing? Picking up the pieces afterwards and then just waiting for the next move? Maybe I'm mistaken, but I didn't know that's how Vikings act." She glanced over at Hiccup, blue eyes meeting green. "Somebody told me that people in Berk never give up. Maybe I should have known that before now."

Looking back at the crowd, Mistyeyes nodded once more. "So if you want to keep rebuilding your houses and keep on going like that forever, then you might as well get back to that." When nobody moved, Mistyeyes couldn't help but let a small smile grace her features. "Right then." She said, more loosely now. "We have to get down to work before anything else can happen. Part of us can work to make the island harder to strike, the other parts can organize a place for the young and old to be, and lastly, the others can make sure that there

can be an easy escape route if we need it."

"And what are you going to do?"

"How do we make the island unreachable?"

"This isn't going to be good, I can tell."

"Can I just go back to fortifying the houses?"

"Yeah, that was easier."

Mistyeyes opened her mouth to answer the relentless questions, but she didn't need to, surprisingly. Stormfly broke in, glaring at the ground as she stood beside the Night Fury. "You all got your jobs, Mistyeyes is right!" She called out. "We won't get anything waiting for things to play out for us! Now hope to it! This side go enforce the island, this side sort out the ones that cannot protect themselves, and the others find a hidden way to leave the island!" When nobody spoke, the Nadder barked out impatiently. "Hop to it!"

Jerking into motion, the other snapped forward, milling around quickly. Wings fluttered with impatience, barks rose into the air, telling others to hurry. Watching the others disperse, Mistyeyes hoped that this wouldn't be one of the things that would blow up in her face again. The thought made her wince, scuttling on the ground nervously as she did so. The importance of being in front of the others was melting, and yet she did not want it to go. Sighing, she turned, giving a smile at the Nadder. "Thanks." She laughed lightly. "You're Stormfly, right?"

The dragon dipped her head. "I've heard a lot about you, Mistyeyes. And I wanted to apologize." Mistyeyes perked her ears at this, not expecting it. "When you first came here, I tried to attack you and get you out of the island, do you remember?" Realization flashed in the Night Fury's eyes, and the Nadder ducked her head. "I hope you'll excuse me. After all, you could understand why I wouldn't want another Night Fury here."

Mistyeyes looked away, ears flat once more. "I understand." She murmured. "Trust me."

"The only problem is that the humans can't hear this." The Nadder said, brushing past Mistyeyes and marching after the group that was fortifying the island. Mistyeyes blinked, eyes sliding over to where Hiccup was standing, the boy still hadn't moved yet. "You're a good planner, Mistyeyes. You should have been here earlier."

"Hah." Mistyeyes let out a dry laugh, watching Stormfly leave until the Nadder vanished over the ridge. "Right." She hissed, looking down at the ground for a moment or two, tail flicking back and forth. It went better than she had expected at least, and she usually expected things to go wrong, of course. It was just her luck for things not to go her way. Or at least it had been like that for some time. Looking up, she felt a flash of panic as she saw Hiccup turn to leave. "Wait!" She gasped, lurching forward and rushing over to stand behind Hiccup. "I don't want this." She puffed. The boy didn't turn. "I know you can hear me. I know because you talked to me." Still nothing. "Please." She begged, voice lowering. "Please talk to

me."

Hesitantly, Hiccup backtracked slightly, turning and looking back at her with a sort of pained expression. He didn't say anything, but Mistyeyes let out a sigh of relief anyhow. "You can talk to me?" She repeated her question. She didn't know how it would turn out, but she wanted a friend, somebody she could talk to. Hiccup seemed like the person to listen to her worries. "You can hear me, right? Please talk to me, I need somebody to talk to."

"I can hear you." Hiccup spoke quietly, looking at her eyes squarely.

Mistyeyes smiled widely, not at all confused on how he could hear her. The thought didn't even cross her mind. "I'm glad." She said finally. "You seem like the kind of person that is really close to dragons." She tilted her head to the side. "You replied to me once, but that was it. I thought I must have gone crazy, or it was something of a coincidence. But now I know I'm not that crazy." She paused before adding. "I'm sort of surprised that you didn't talk to Toothless before now, after all, you've known him longer than me." At Hiccup's uncomfortable expression, she added quickly. "But I don't mind, you don't have to give me an answer, I can respect that."

"You seem pretty comfortable talking to a human." Hiccup said eventually, looking her up and down.

"I don't see much of a difference. Dragon, human, we all live together. At least, I live with humans now." Mistyeyes revised. As she spoke, she could tell that Hiccup's shoulders were relaxing slightly, drooping to a more easy stance. Mistyeyes blinked, giving the boy a smile. "I've been very interested in you, Hiccup." She said. "After all, you were the one who made this all possible, right? Or did I hear wrong?" She gestured with her tail to the village of dragons behind her as she spoke.

"No, you heard right." Hiccup said, his voice getting easier as well. He glanced behind his shoulder. "Me and Toothless, anyway. It wasn't that easy though." Hiccup winced, looking away from Mistyeyes and training his gaze on the ground, as if he had suddenly forgotten what to say. Mistyeyes flicked her ears in agreement, ignoring the behavior. It was his first time talking with a dragon, she guessed. It wasn't as easy for him, it looked like.

"Well, if you heard me talking, could you pass on the warning to your father? We need everyone on board for this, and if we don't, it could all fall apart. That wouldn't be very good for us." Mistyeyes's ears flattened to her head, shifting her paws on the ground uneasily. Hiccup paused, before he nodded slowly.

"I could." He murmured, awkwardness hanging in the air between the two. "Although my father knows I'm not much of a fighter. He'll be pretty impressed that I came up with it on my own. I don't know what I'll tell him about that part."

"Anything can be better than saying I told you, right?" Mistyeyes joked.

Hiccup smiled, the dragon weaseling a laugh out of him finally. The female smiled.

But then her smile faltered as she looked at the ground. "I'm sorry." She whispered, closing her eyes. "I was the dragon that told Toothless to attack you in the cave. I can understand if you don't like me. I can understand if you're uncomfortable. I did a lot of things I regret, and I know I can't go back and undo them. I just hoped that maybe if I came here, I would be able to become a better dragon like Toothless. Be able to become one of Berk." She opened her eyes slightly, glancing at him. "It'll take a while, but maybeâ€¦maybe I'll be able to redeem myself."

Silence formed a bridge between them for a moment, until Hiccup stepped forward, almost touching Mistyeyes. The dragon perked, blinking as she looked over at the human. He gave her a small smile, the smile toothy and a little sloppy. "I think you'll fit in perfectly." He promised her, locking her eyes with his own.

Mistyeyes straightened, her tail curling with happiness as her blue eye shone.

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The ferns rustled loudly, Fleetfoot jumping with surprise as he turned to look over his shoulder. The foliage parted, revealing Nightflight as she stepped forward, green eyes glinting as she looked over at him. Instead of barking out orders as she usually did when she came out of her nest, the dragon padded forward, marching up to the male and settling herself down beside him. Curling her tail over her paws, Nightflight raised her head to look up at the sky almost aimlessly.

"Something wrong?" Fleetfoot asked, bending over to look at her anxiously.

The dragon chuffed. "Not at all." She said smoothly, lowering her gaze as she looked at him. "But it does seem as though we might have an obstacle." At Fleetfoot's confused look, the female explained. "The traitor Mistyeyes is rallying up the dragons in Berk, ordering them around as though she sits on a throne." She scoffed. "The dragons seem to be looking to her now."

"So what do we do?" Fleetfoot asked, blinking.

"We must go soon." Nightflight answered after a while. "Before the idiots can get too far in their 'teamwork.' As odd as it may seem, if we let it get to the point they all learn how to cooperate with one another without difficulty, it may be too late."

"I'll get the others." Fleetfoot said, getting up and stalking away. His wings were fluttering angrily, his steps thudding loudly on the ground. Nightflight flicked an ear, glancing up the clear night sky once more. The stars were like little gems in the sky winking and gleaming back at her where she sat.

"No, Fleetfoot." Nightflight said smoothly, stopping the dragon in his tracks. A confused noise came from him, but Nightflight ignored it. She instead looked across the water that surrounded their makeshift home, narrowing her eyes to slits as she looked in the

direction of Berk. "We must have patience."

She twitched her tail, unsheathing her claws as her voice grew dark.
"All good things come to those who wait."

17. Chapter 17

A/N: We're getting close to 200 reviews! I'm so excited! ^^

Anyway, those of you who haven't read Warriors yet, you should. It's a really good series!

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Hiccup stood in front of his house, staring at the door awkwardly, his hand rubbing the back of his neck nervously as he tried to figure out what he was going to say. He had no idea, frankly. He wasn't sure his father would even listen to him, he usually didn't. For him to hear Hiccup out would be a miracle, and that had shown quite blandly in the past. Sucking in a deep breath, Hiccup pushed open the door with a creak, poking his head inside and looking around quickly. His father was sitting in front of the fire as he usually did in the evenings, staring in the fire as if he were reading something from the flames.

The creak of the door roused him from his thoughts, the man perking up as he looked back at the doorway. Catching sight of his son, Stoick raised an eyebrow expectantly, catching the gleam of purpose in the smaller boy's eyes. Standing there for a moment in silence, Hiccup shook himself. "Well, you seem busy." He muttered quickly, starting to duck his head out of the house, in preparation for slamming the door and rushing back the way he had come.

"What do ye want, Hiccup?" Stoick asked irritably, Hiccup freezing to a stop. Closing his eyes tightly, Hiccup gritted his teeth together in frustration. He'd been so close. Sighing just loud enough so that his father wouldn't be able to hear it, Hiccup opened the door fully, stepping inside and shutting the door behind him. It closed with a slam, almost like a prison door sealing him inside. He winced slightly, fisting and un-fisting his hands at his sides rapidly.

"I was thinkingâ€¦" Hiccup started, tapping his wrists on his sides fitfully, staring at the ground and not meeting his father's eyes. "I was thinking that maybe you could try andâ€¦think about what's going on outside a little differentlyâ€¦?" He sneaked a glance over at his father, who was looking at his son through narrowed eyes, not speaking. He guessed that meant he had to talk more. "I mean- what you're doing right now isn't reallyâ€¦cutting it. It's not like I'm trying to downgrade your chiefting, I just mean to say that maybe since it's failedâ€¦three timesâ€¦you could maybe listen to what I thinkâ€¦" Was chiefting even a word? He felt himself failing even now. And his father hadn't even replied yet.

Stoick still refused to talk, if he was confused, he hid it well though. He stared at Hiccup, glaring suspiciously at his son as Hiccup started to bit his lower lip. "What are ye tryin to say?" Stoick grunted, impatient by this time. Hiccup still didn't look up from the ground, green eyes downcast as if he were regretting coming

here. His voice and tone surely implied that. "Spit it out, Hiccup." Stoick said, a little sharper now. The crackling of the fire was the only thing that made a noise for a moment, filling the room as if it were trying to fill the awkward silence and take notice away from the scene playing out. The thought made Hiccup scowl inwardly. Even the fire felt bad for him.

"Wellâ€¦" Hiccup sucked in another deep breath, feeling his head spin slightly. "The dragons have attacked here more than a few times, they're not like the other dragon raids either. They aren't here just for food." He went on quickly, afraid his father would ask how he would know such a thing like that. "Usually we would just rebuild after the other dragon raids, but this one I think needs a better tactic than that." He paused a moment, gathering his thoughts rapidly as they flew away from him like leaves. He didn't usually talk to his father, and this was why. He knew what he would say beforehand, but he couldn't remember them as soon as he started to open his mouth.

"So, I think we should try things differently. We should try toâ€¦maybe stop our efforts in rebuilding the houses. They'll just get burned down again if we don't try to do other things like maybe making the island safer from the dragons, help the people that can't fight have a hiding place so there isn't any deaths. Try to find a better escape route from the island if we need to retreatâ€¦" He trailed off as he saw his father looking at him oddly by now. Snapping his mouth shut, Hiccup grounded his teeth together tightly, unable to think of anything to say.

"You're sayin that we should attack them back." Stoick said in a low mutter.

"â€¦" Hiccup ducked his head, not replying as he studied the ground.

"You're saying we should attack them." Stoick repeated. "Kill them so they wont kill us."

"I never said that." Hiccup said falteringly.

"But ye implied it." Stoick clarified. "I thought you were friends with the dragons."

"You aren't listening to what I'm saying!" Hiccup blustered. "We just need a better plan than this! We don't need to kill themâ€¦we can put them in the old stables!" The thought sailed in his mind like a gift from the gods. "We can capture them like the old dragons and then put them in the stables! That way we wont have to kill them, and in time maybe they could be apart of Berk too."

"Ye said that about the other dragon you brought here." Stoick grunted, still glowering at his son.

"â€¦Right." Hiccup huffed, eyes downcast as he looked at the ground heavily.

Silence came once more, and Stoick looked away from him and back at the fire. Hiccup followed his gaze, disappointment welling up inside his chest. What did the fire have that he didn't? His father looked at that all the time and never at him. It was obvious that as Stoick

looked away, he was dismissing his son, Hiccup getting the message clear as day. He'd been sent away from his father many a times, he knew the routine. Closing his eyes, he let out an angered huff. "Thanks for listening to me." He whispered under his breath. If his father heard, he made no signs to tell so.

Turning around glumly, Hiccup went out the door and shut it behind him once more. The freezing night air met him full-force, the boy's hair slicking back to his head from the blast. Looking around the village, Hiccup could see that among the humans who were still rebuilding the houses and such, Hiccup could also see the dragons milling about, ignoring their humans for once as they continued with their preparations. Mistyeyes was doing all the jobs, walking around and assessing the works of the others with careful and studious eyes. Her blue eyes seemed to be so caught up with her work, that for a moment of relief, Hiccup thought that she wouldn't see him standing outside his door.

But right when he was about to leave, the dragon caught sight of him, eyes lighting up as she did so. Getting to her feet, Hiccup's heart hammered as she started towards him, calling out a greeting as she held her tail high. It seemed as though she had much more confidence now for some reason. Looking much more pleased than she had been in a long time, Hiccup winced, ducking his head. He wasn't about to let her have the bad news, that would mean that he would just have failed at something else. Turning swiftly, Hiccup rushed back the way he had come, Mistyeyes's ears pricking with confusion as she came to a stop. "Hiccup!" She called out loudly, but Hiccup kept walking.

Almost unconsciously, Hiccup turned towards the Blacksmith's. The small shack coming into view, Hiccup gave a small smile as he caught sight of a familiar figure talking to Gobber. Astrid stood at the window of the shop, resting her head on her hand lazily as she watched Gobber work. The Blacksmith held Astrid's family sword, her father must have wanted it sharpened considering all of the dangerous things that had been going on around here.

Quickening his pace, Hiccup raced forward a little unsteadily, skidding to a stop behind Astrid as he called out a greeting. "Hey, Astrid!" He called cheerily. Upon seeing the girl, his worries melted away to be replaced by the same light feeling he always got around her. It took a while to get used to, mind you. But at least now he knew where to go when he was in trouble. Or being troubled. "You didn't tell me that you wanted your sword sharpened, I could have done it." Anything to get his mind off things.

To his surprise, Astrid turned around slowly, her blue eyes cold and narrowed as she looked down on him. "What do you want now?" The girl spat angrily, looking him up and down. Hiccup blinked rapidly, smile faltering as he tilted his head in confusion. "I suppose you're here to tell me more about how I care about nobody but myself, huh?"

"Huh?" Hiccup asked, smile completely gone by now.

"You know what?" Astrid asked, putting her hands on her hips. "If you think that you can come back here and pretend like nothing happened, you're wrong. If you think I don't care about you, maybe you should just leave me alone. Just go away and don't talk to me. Then you won't have to stand being around me." With that, she spun around, glowering

down at the wood of the building angrily.

"What are you talking about, Astrid? I haven't seen you all day!" Hiccup protested. It couldn't have been something he said! Looking into the Blacksmith's, Hiccup felt frustration well up inside him as Gobber only looked at them with interest, not at all helping him. Pausing for a moment, Hiccup reached forward, trying to place his hand on Astrid's shoulder to turn her around. But the girl shrugged him off as soon as he touched her, throwing a glare over her shoulder as she did so.

Looking from Gobber to Astrid, Hiccup let his hand fall back with a smack to his side. Hesitantly, he turned, walking away from the Blacksmith's with a look full of confusion. As he went back to find something else to do, he kept throwing glances behind his shoulder the whole way. But Astrid never even looked back at him, her posture stiff as she kept her glare fixedly on the wood of the Blacksmith's. Her look could have burned a hole straight through the thick wood and set the whole place on fire.

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Flicking her tail angrily, Mistyeyes sat on the ground with a huff, watching in disappointment as Hiccup's retreating figure. Glancing behind her shoulder, she eyed the work that the other dragons had started, feeling a glimmer of pride at the work that was already put into motion. The group in charge of finding an escape route were gathered together in a tight cluster, one dragon in the middle. One claw was out, the dragon tracing intricate lines of the island to the others, another being sent to fly off to make sure the map was correct.

The group in charge of the old and young were sitting together discussing strategies, the other half of the group gone off to take count of the seniors and children. The last group had a harder task, to make the island more protected. Mistyeyes tried to figure out what they were doing just by looking, but the Night Fury sighed lightly as she realized that she had no clue what they were doing. They were saying something, the other dragons seeming to be energized with excitement at whatever the head dragon was speaking about. Deciding she would go and check it out, Mistyeyes pushed herself up off the ground, walking forward and starting towards the group with curiosity gleaming in her eyes.

But a small voice behind her stopped her in her tracks. "Mistyyeyes." The dragon halted, feet skidding in front of her for a moment as she tried to get herself to turn around. Blinking, she regained control of herself, spinning around and looking down with a large smile. "Hi, Shadowclaw!" She greeted warmly, eyes closing with happiness. "You're probably wondering where to go, aren't you? Well, I'm sure you can help the others with finding all the little children and old adults. That's where I sent most of the other younglings. Maybe-"

"I don't want to do that." The little dragon said quietly, ears flat to his head as he looked at the ground. Sitting right by him was Ludi, the cat seemed to be the dragon's shadow in the dim light of the night. Seeming them together all of the time, Mistyeyes couldn't help but wonder if they understood one another, it wasn't like Mistyeyes had ever tried to talk to the small cat.

"Maybe you can help with the escape route? I'm sure--"

"Mistyeyes, I'm leaving." Shadowclaw said in a low mummer, looking at his paws shyly as he refused to look up from them. The gray Night Fury stiffened at once, eyes widening with disbelief as she looked down at the little dragon. She opened her mouth to question him, but Shadowclaw beat her to it. "I'm going back to the Pack, Mistyeyes." He said, voice tinged with guilt.

"W-What!" Mistyeyes yelled shrilly, eyes sparking with alarm. "Why would you do that, Shadowclaw? You have everything you need here! You have everything you'd ever want! Family—friends! Nothing is waiting at the pack for you except Nightflight and the dragons that changed! They aren't your family, Shadowclaw, please don't go! You have bees in your brain!"

"No, I don't." Shadowclaw said bravely, narrowing his eyes as he raised his head to look at her squarely. "I've been thinking about it for a long time, Mistyeyes, whether you noticed or not." The female felt guilt prick at her as she realized she did not notice Shadowclaw's recent absence from the group. Ludi must have been with him also, did Hiccup realize his cat was never around anymore? Her thoughts were interrupted as Shadowclaw went on. "It's no use to stay here anymore."

"Why would you say that?" Mistyeyes asked, forcing herself to stay calm and collected. Calming her nerves, Mistyeyes bent down so that she could see Shadowclaw better. The dragon was small for his age. She tilted her head to the side. "You have Hiccup here, Toothless, me, Ludi! Why would you want to abandon us and go back?" Suddenly, she drew back sharply. "Are you on their side now?" She asked, looking at Shadowclaw with a penetrating look.

Shadowclaw went silent, looking away thoughtfully, lining up what he would say. Mistyeyes looked back over her shoulder, glancing back at the groups working swiftly. She had seen Shadowclaw playing with the younglings that were now working hard, he had seen the smaller dragon listening to the older dragon's stories of when Hiccup saved the village with wonder-filled eyes. If he went back to live with the other dragons, there was no doubt that the youngling would have to destroy all of these dragons, would have to be fueled by Nightflight's spite and anger of the humans and dragons alike.

"I'm going back to save you." Shadowclaw said finally, tail flicking side to side. Ludi blinked, turning and peering over at her friend with wide eyes, as if hanging on to every word. At Mistyeyes's confused look, he took a slow breath and explained. "I knew it ever since the first attack, they were just attacking to get me and Toothless back to the Pack." He went on quickly as Mistyeyes started to object. "It may not be the whole reason, but it's a big part of it."

"You can't just give up." Mistyeyes murmured. "You can't give in to them."

"If I give them what they want, maybe they'll stop." Shadowclaw said firmly.

"But they would still try to get Toothless. It wouldn't affect

anything."

"Of course it will." Shadowclaw said clearly. He paused for a moment, as if holding back something from her. Mistyeyes narrowed her eyes slowly, gaze searching his own. But Shadowclaw lifted his green eyes to her blue ones, confident and unwavering. "I'm leaving, Mistyeyes." He said, almost sternly. "And there is nothing you can do to change my mind. I know what I'm doing and I am not asking for your permission."

Mistyeyes hesitated for a moment. "And Toothless?" She asked, voice choked.

"He doesn't know what I'm doing." Shadowclaw said. "I didn't have the heart to tell him. He wouldn't understand at all—not after what happened to him. I know you were hurt by the Clan too, but I knew that you would know what it's like to miss your old home." The female felt a flash of guilt surprisingly at that, but she did not deny the fact. Catching her look, Shadowclaw gave a small nod. "I won't waste any more of your time, then." Glancing behind her, he hesitated. "I won't tell them what you're doing here. That wouldn't be fair."

Unsure of what to say, Mistyeyes dipped her head rather awkwardly. The youngling looked at her intensely for a moment before he turned, pacing forward and making for the edge of the island. The cat watched him go, narrowing her eyes slowly into careful slits. Tail twitching back and forth, Mistyeyes swore that she saw the small cat give a nod of affirmation. Either to herself, or to her friend, who had paused to glance back over at her. Something passed between the two, Mistyeyes was sure of it. Glancing down at the cat suspiciously, Mistyeyes called out to Shadowclaw, pushing herself forward and charging after the dragon. "Wait!" She called out.

Shadowclaw paused at the edge of the cliff, turning and looking back at her. Flicking his ears, Shadowclaw waited for her patiently, his black form blending into the night better than Mistyeyes's own gray one. Skidding to a halt, Mistyeyes panted for a moment, tongue sticking out slightly as she puffed for air. Glancing back at the village, Mistyeyes felt a tug on her heart. Was there really no way to get Shadowclaw to stay? With dragons and little humans alike who loved him so much?

But looking back at the youngling's determined eyes, Mistyeyes knew there was no way. Ducking her head low, Mistyeyes studied the ground, barley visible in the fading light of day. "I hope you find what you are looking for, Shadowclaw." She said slowly, voice quiet. "I hope that you're happy with this decision."

"I will be." Shadowclaw said, voice somewhat flat.

Raising her eyes, Mistyeyes watched with shadowed eyes as the small dragon pushed off the island, soaring forward and catching air at once, flapping his wings largely. She sat there, staring across the waters and watching Shadowclaw's form get smaller and smaller, an ache in her heart. Watching a small dragon youngling flying away made her heart constrict and squeeze, she didn't know why. She was so caught up in her emotions, she didn't hear the footsteps heading for her.

"Where's Shadowclaw going?" Toothless asked. Mistyeyes turned, eyes wide. The dragon eyed her cautiously, keeping his distance from her. Tension rang in the air between them, thick as water. Lightning seemed to light up the distance between them, rubbing Mistyeyes the wrong way and making her wince inwardly. Hesitating, Mistyeyes did the same thing she had done with Shadowclaw, wiping away her emotions so that she was calm. It worked well, the female straightening and tilting her chin up in the air as she looked out across the water.

"Shadowclaw has gone back to the other Night Furies." She said.

"What!" Toothless roared, more out of surprise than anger. "How could you?" "Why?" He seemed unable to think of anything to say. "We have to go get him, I can't believe you let him go like that! He's a youngling, he had no idea what he's doing!" He started forward, stomping on the ground loudly. But Mistyeyes stepped forward, stepping in front of him and blocking him from the sea. Toothless blinked, surprised. "Move over!" He complained, Mistyeyes feeling a flash of surprise as she didn't detect anger in the male's voice.

"No." She said firmly, voice clear. Toothless blinked, ears flicking as he looked at her expectantly. "Shadowclaw knew exactly what he was doing, Toothless, trust me." Her blue eyes bored into Toothless's green ones, willing the strong-headed male to understand. "We cannot force Shadowclaw to stay when that is not what he wishes. His paws are on the path laid out for him, and we cannot push him off his destiny. Some dragons aren't meant to be cared for. They are meant to listen to their own voice of reason, other than that of a human's."

Toothless flicked his tail, green eyes saddened as he peered over Mistyeyes's shoulder in vain. "But I could talk to him." He pressed, ears flattening to his head. "We have to get him to stay, Mistyeyes. I won't be able to if he was my friend. How could he do something like this? I thought he was on our side, Mistyeyes." Glancing down, Toothless muttered under his breath. "I could get him to stay."

"No you couldn't, I already tried." Mistyeyes said fairly, stepping away from him and sitting on the ground a ways away from him, aware he wouldn't want her any closer. "He was sure in this, Toothless, not even you could have gotten him to stay. He told me he didn't tell you because he knew you would try to get him to stay. He's not a fool, Toothless. You needn't worry about him too long."

She was about to get up and walk back to work, but Toothless spoke, making her stop. "I don't like it when you do that." Toothless said bluntly, looking at her intensely. When Mistyeyes looked confused, he clarified, pointing at her with his paw as he spoke. "I don't like it when you talk like that. Like you're on business or something like that."

Looking over at him a little sharper than she meant to, Mistyeyes sniffed loudly. "I thought you would like that better." She said stiffly, lashing her tail. "After all, we can't have a decent conversation without you biting my head off." The last part slipped out, but she wasn't all that sure she regretted it. She needed to get it off her chest anyway. She couldn't help but feel a twinge of

satisfaction as she saw Toothless wince slightly.

"That's my fault" Toothless mumbled, embarrassed.

"You think?" Mistyeyes asked close to exasperation.

"It's just because I'm worried, I guess." Toothless whispered. Mistyeyes perked her ears, turning and looking closely at the male. "The last Night Fury I trusted was Nightflight. I can't bring myself to trust anybody else. For both my sake and Hiccup's."

Mistyeyes picked out a scathing retort in her mind, but she figured that now would not be the best time to say a thing like that. Sighing through her nose, Mistyeyes studied the ground for a moment. She could hear the other dragons talking and working amongst themselves where she sat, but she couldn't bring herself to try and think about them. Glancing over at Toothless from the corner of her eye, she said. "I guess only time will tell you whether or not I'm like Nightflight. It isn't something I can say or do to get you to put faith in me. It's just something that comes or goes."

Toothless gave a hum of agreement.

Eyes softening somewhat, Mistyeyes spoke up, voice much lighter than before. "You know, Toothless." She purred happily. "I do remember you. Back when you were in the cave with us." Toothless looked at her, eyes curious. "I always thought you were a little more annoying than I could handle—we never talked much at all." Her eyes narrowed sadly. "But—whenever I saw you playing with Nightflight—catching fireflies with her, seeing who was fastest. I was—sad." Her ears flattened. "I was jealous that somebody like her got somebody like you."

Silence weighed heavily in between them once more, Mistyeyes giving a light sigh as she gazed across the water. "Nevertheless." She said dismissively. "You shouldn't worry about Shadowclaw. I have a feeling he's going to be just fine." When Toothless refused to say anything, she added. "If you try to go after him, you'll likely be killed. Think logically. Think how Hiccup would feel if you got killed doing a task that was worthless in its own right."

"I suppose." Toothless agreed hesitantly.

Getting up, she glanced back at him, flicking her ears thoughtfully. "Do you have a group?" She asked.

"Mistyeyes—I wanted to apologize." He said in a muted tone. Mistyeyes tried not to look surprised. He was full of surprises today apparently. "I saw you up there, talking to the others. I heard you talk, and I wanted to tell you that I was wrong about you. It seems like I've been wrong about you for a lot of things."

"I don't mind." Mistyeyes blurted out, face burning with embarrassment. "I mean— you have your reasons. It's not up to me to control your mind."

"I told you I don't like it when you talk like that." Toothless complained.

himself, standing in the doorway like an idiot. "I didn't even do anything wrong. Why is everybody freaking out at me?" Looking down dejectedly, he scuffed the tip of his boot in the dirt, suddenly not all that hungry anymore. If the other people in the village saw him sitting alone at his old table, they would know for sure something was wrong. At least, that's what Hiccup figured.

Blowing out his cheeks, Hiccup watched for a moment more, stomach churning as he watched the back of Astrid's head hopefully, waiting for her to turn around. But as if she sensed his gaze, her shoulders hunched, refusing to turn and meet his eyes. Ruffnut, who was sitting across from her, saw Hiccup looking, the girl blinking as she straightened. Hiccup started, looking at her questioningly, but if Ruffnut was in on Astrid's anger, she wasn't showing it as obviously as her friend was. The blonde just shook herself, looking back down and starting to eat her dinner.

Huffing softly, Hiccup turned, walking the opposite direction of the other villagers arriving for dinner. Weaving through the crowd, Hiccup started down the hill aimlessly. Even the other dragons were trotting off to eat, pretty soon he was going to be the only person still out here. Wincing, Hiccup got out of the way of the others, stepping aside and watching them go. Foot tapping slowly, Hiccup's prediction became true, the village was deserted. A few sheep were still mulling about, braying to one another and chewing up grass with loud smacks. Looking around, Hiccup tried to think of something else he could do than just standing here.

A small noise behind him made him jump a foot into the air. Whirling around, Hiccup started, tense. But he relaxed at once as he saw Ludi standing a ways away from him, eyes shining as she bounded over to him, tail raised in the air. Her blue eyes searched his own as she came to a stop at his feet, plopping down on the ground and kneading the grass excitedly. "Oh!" Hiccup said, slightly caught off-guard. Leaning over, he knelt down on the grass in front of her, reaching over and stroking his hand across her fluffy fur. "There you are! I've been wondering what you've been up to!"

The cat didn't seem to mind the long pause between their relationship, her purr loud enough for Hiccup to hear it a mile away. Worries washing away at once, Hiccup breathed out a small laugh, smiling wide as he felt affection rush up in his throat. "Sorry I haven't been around." He added, glancing over his shoulder. "It's been crazy around here." Pausing he went on, more angrily now. "And now everybody is mad at me for no reason, so there's that again."

Ludi flicked her tail, as if to say: 'Well that doesn't matter now. Keep petting me.' The thought made a smile twitch across Hiccup's face. "Anyway, we have a lot to catch up on now, don't we?" He asked, reaching over and scooping Ludi up to hold her tightly in his arms. "Let's go back to the house, I don't want to-" He broke off, mouth snapping closed as he saw forms rushing up to him. Recognizing the shapes, Hiccup shifted Ludi, trying to organize her somewhere that was comfortable for him to hold her.

But old habits died hard. Ludi's claws slid out at once, the cat clawing her way painfully up to Hiccup's shoulder, tail lashing back and forth happily. Hiccup gasped at once, twisting and almost buckling under the now-grown cat's weight. Wincing, Hiccup stretched

his neck awkwardly to the side, quite painful actually. But Ludi was satisfied, the cat's nose tilted to the sky triumphantly, claws sticking and burning into Hiccup's skin. "Sure." Hiccup grimaced, shooting a glare at the cat, who was oblivious.

Mistyeyes and Toothless rushed up to Hiccup, hopping to a stop in front of him. Looking at the two, Hiccup felt a flash of jealousy as he saw that they were standing close together, the argument they had had before seeming to have disappeared from their mind. But looking at Mistyeyes, Hiccup realized with a jolt that he had been avoiding her before now. That option was gone now.

"Hiccup!" Mistyeyes puffed, eyes sparkling. Toothless blinked, looking between the two skeptically, ear twitching.

"Look at the time!" Hiccup yelled, looking up at the cloudy sky rapidly. "I've got to get to dinner, what am I doing just sitting around here, I've gotta go!" Pausing for a moment, he jerked into motion spinning around and retracing his steps back to the mess hall. Ludi squealed, crouching down and clinging to Hiccup's shoulder with a startled expression. It was obvious she figured out the reason she hadn't gotten on Hiccup's shoulder for a long time. "You're too big." He said, glancing over at her, neck still bent. "You could do this when you were little, but not anymore."

Mistyeyes blinked, turning to Toothless. "You should go eat." When Toothless looked as though he would object, she added. "I'll meet you up there, alright? Calm down, I'll make sure Hiccup gets to the hall as well." Looking slightly wounded, Toothless turned, rushing forward and making for the dining hall. Watching him for a moment, Mistyeyes bounded after Hiccup, calling his name once more.

Stifling a sigh, Hiccup turned around, waiting almost-patiently as Mistyeyes started for him. Looking over at Ludi with an irritated expression, he muttered under his breath. "Toothless never bothered me as much as she does right now." Though the comment was a little uncalled for, Hiccup realized he had been neglecting Toothless just as much as Ludi. Something that made him feel guilty as he watched Toothless disappear over the hill. He hadn't been himself lately, that much was certain.

"Hiccup!" Mistyeyes gasped, finally reaching him. "You're fast." She puffed.

"There's a first." Hiccup mumbled to himself.

"Anyway! Did you talk to your father yet?" Mistyeyes smiled eagerly at him. "I really think that if both sides of us are working together, we can beat the other Night Furies, wouldn't that be great?" She broke off, narrowing her eyes in concern as she saw his expression. "Hiccup, what's the matter? He did say he would help us, right?"

Her words sounded muted, like Hiccup was underwater. Pushing it away, Hiccup squinted, straining in order for him to make sense of what she was saying. "Uh- right." He said, straightening. "No, I'm fine. The thing is. It's really funny." He started gesturing with his hands, as he always did when he got nervous. "I don't KNOW where my dad is right now—he's gone!"

Mistyeyes looked miffed. "Isn't he just in the Hall?" She asked, looking at him like he was stupid.

"He doesn't eat dinner on Tuesdays." Hiccup said bluntly.

"â€|Huh." Mistyeyes murmured, looking confused. "That's a little weird."

"Yup, gotta go!" Hiccup turned and broke into a clumsy run, rushing away before she could say anything else.

[illegible]

The next day was cloudy and the air smelled distinctly like rain. Hiccup woke up just as the sun was making a small pink streak across the sky. Getting dressed, Hiccup immediately turned around, looking in the corner that Toothless usually slept in. The Night Fury was currently curled up into a tight ball, even he wasn't up at this hour yet. The thought made Hiccup grimace. The last time the boy had taken Toothless out for a flying session was when they first found the female Night Fury. Hiccup didn't count the time that Toothless got mad at him.

Well, he wasn't going to let his buddy get even more neglected. Marching forward, Hiccup crouched down, reaching over and poking his head softly. "Toothless." He whispered, pausing as he waited for the dragon to react. But the dragon remained asleep, his paw tucked over his nose comfortably. The sight made Hiccup even more aware of his heavy eyelids, but he shook himself roughly. "Toothless!" He yelled in the dragon's ear, now understanding why the Night Fury sometimes needed to use force to get him up in the morning. It's harder to wake somebody up than it looked.

Toothless jerked, bristling and lashing his tail back and forth rapidly. His green eyes were panicked until he met Hiccup's gaze. "Toothless. Panic turned to irritation, and Hiccup was almost expecting the cross flick of Toothless's tail across his chest. Wincing slightly, Hiccup brushed it away, immediately smiling one again. "C'mon, Toothless!" He said, reaching over and bopping the dragon on the head. "I thought that today we could go out and fly! What do you say?" He chirped, getting to his feet and smiling at the happy gleam in the dragon's eye.

"We should go before Ludi-" He broke off, spotting the cat out of the corner of his eye. The small thing uncurled, stretching with a wide yawn as she sat up. Ears flicking, the cat looked up at him expectantly, purring. Eyes flickering over to Toothless, he walked forward, patting the cat's head. "C'mon, Ludi." He said encouragingly. "You hate flying. We'll be right back, why don't you just-" He stiffened as the smaller cat hissed loudly at him. She then proceeded to jump up onto Hiccup's shoulder and nest herself comfortably down. There wasn't any say in this, she was obviously coming whether Hiccup wanted it or not. "Oh well." He sighed. "One more passenger, Toothless."

Seeming unbothered by it, Toothless hopped to his feet, pelting in front of Hiccup and rushing out of the house in the blink of an eye. After months of learning, Toothless could now sneak out of the house without so much as making a small bump to wake people. Considering

the way he hops up and down on the roof to wake him up, Hiccup wasn't all that sure why that skill would be needed. Shrugging it off, Hiccup trailed after Toothless, pushing open the door and stepping outside.

Looking up, Hiccup saw that the clouds were slowly rolling in, thunder rumbling a tale of rain in the distance. It would wash away the last remains of the attack, that much was certain. Toothless had his nose lifted to the air, clearly thinking the same thing as his eyes became slightly clouded. "Alright!" Hiccup said, snapping the dragon out of his thoughts. "Let's get going, right?" Toothless purred, nodding affirmatively. Seeing it made Hiccup smile. It was just like going out in the old times, no more confusion or other people to get-

"Toothless! What are you doing up?" Hiccup jumped, turning around and seeing Mistyeyes bouncing towards the Night Fury. She spoke merrily, her eyes sparkling. She showed no sign of being tired, despite the fact that the sun wasn't even up yet. Toothless looked her up and down, glancing over at Hiccup questioningly. The boy wiped away his emotions, making himself look blank and normal.

Turning back, Toothless shrugged. "I could ask you the same thing." He said lightly.

"Oh, I've been fishing for eels for a long time now. Since before you even thought of waking up."

Toothless's eyes flew open. "Eels!" He repeated. "Why would you do that!"

"Oh, we're going to line the island with them in an effort to keep the Night Furies out." Mistyeyes explained, laughter hidden in her voice. "It's the best thing we could think of to keep them out. We're just going to line the village with a bunch of eels."

"There's not enough eels to go around." Toothless said fairly.

"Maybe, but it's the best we can do." Changing the subject, she went on. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going flying with Hiccup." Toothless said, jerking his head back to gesture back at his human. "We haven't gone out together alone for a long time." He put emphasis on We, looking at her differently to make sure she didn't get any ideas. Mistyeyes blinked, smiling as a sign that she got what he meant. Nodding once, Mistyeyes tried to catch Hiccup's eye, but the boy busied himself by latching on Toothless's saddle, watching his hands working intently.

"Alright." Mistyeyes said happily, unfazed. "I'll let you get to it then. Those eels won't catch themselves." At this, she shivered slightly, making a face. "It's difficult to fish without biting into them, after this I'll have to wash my paws thoroughly, right? Have fun, Toothless, hope you don't get rained out." Toothless pricked his ears, as if trying to decide if she was being sarcastic. But the female only dipped her head, spinning around and charging back away in direction of the forest.

Hiccup moved to stand beside Toothless's head, craning his neck as he

spotted a growing-pile of eels stacked up in the middle of the village. "She's made progress, you have to admit it." Toothless grunted in acknowledgment, shuffling his paws on the ground impatiently. Glancing up at the sky, Hiccup felt a little nervous at the clouds hanging over the village darkly. Humidity weighed heavily in the air, Hiccup's shirt sticking to him even now. It was early, he didn't want to see what would happen later in the day. "Maybe we shouldn't go out." He said hesitantly.

Toothless looked over at him pleadingly. "It's only for a little while!" He objected.

Hiccup blinked, weighing his options in his mind. "â€|Alright." He said finally. "After all, I guess it wont take that long, right?" When Toothless nodded vigorously, Hiccup grabbed Toothless's saddle, hoisting himself up clumsily. Gritting his teeth together, Hiccup didn't bother to strap himself in, he never did when he went flying with Toothless anymore. They always tried to master the trick of jumping off and back on, if he was strapped in, he wouldn't be able to jump off. But suddenly, he remembered something.

Looking down, Hiccup almost unconsciously pushed his foot into the holder. But the holder was gone, Toothless didn't have his red tail anymore, he had kept it this time. Sighing lightly, Hiccup turned back, muttering softly to himself. "I guess the trick wont be as special nowâ€|" He had meant to say it so Toothless wouldn't hear, but Hiccup saw the dragon's ears lie flat against his head. Looking back down dejectedly, he inhaled largely. It would be weird for him not to control Toothless anymore, to let the dragon do whatever he wanted.

"Go." He said quietly, eyes downcast now. Ludi shuffled forward to sit in between Hiccup's lap and Toothless's head, gripping the leather saddle tightly. When Toothless didn't move, Hiccup spoke up. "Go!" He yelled, feeling the wind stir up an emotion in him. He felt light, like he always did when he went flying. Toothless picked up on it as well, shooting into the air and swooping up into the sky like a hawk. Ludi immediately squealed, clinging for life onto the dragon.

Why did she even want to come anyway?

Hiccup held onto Toothless with one hand, onto Ludi with the other. Juggling his two friends, Hiccup felt frazzled, teeth grinding together and eyes wide. Toothless's wings were like a blur, the dragon spinning and twirling in midair, obviously not conscious of Hiccup's struggle. But Hiccup could not ignore the happy fluttering in his chest, something he hadn't felt in a while. He left all his worries on the ground, in the sky, nothing could go wrong.

Toothless gave a high chirp, the dragon halting in his spins and twists as he looked back to Hiccup with a smile. Blinking, Hiccup smirked back, looking down and picking up Ludi in his arms. The cat yowled with surprise, claws sticking out and clawing into Hiccup's shirt in an effort to cling on to her human. Getting up, Hiccup balanced shakily on the dragon, Ludi yowling and spitting with rage. Toothless bucked, giving Hiccup an extra boost as the boy launched himself up into the air.

Ludi went completely still, probably watching her life flash in front

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Please review! I thought the last few chapters were too sad, so here is my gift of happiness!

The island milled around with busy dragons, tails lashing with both excitement and a sense of nervousness. Voices rose into the air, following with them a cloud of vapor from the freezing coming-night air. Black shapes milled across the fairly large island, looking almost like fish in their likeness. Every dragon was attentive, talking excitedly amongst themselves with eyes shining. The suspense was killing every single dragon there. All except one.

Getting to his feet, Shadowclaw shook himself out, wings splaying out and fanning in the slight breeze. He had grown a lot since he played with Toothless in the caves, both mentally and physically. His wings were getting much bigger, as well as his muscles that rippled underneath his scales. Mulling over his thoughts for a moment, Shadowclaw looked at the ground, oblivious to whatever was going on around him.

Her words were drowned out as Shadowclaw turned his gaze slightly, watching as Nightflight disappeared from the throng of dragons, disappearing from view. Shadowclaw fought to growl out loud, he had to talk to her before they left! Otherwise everything would be for nothing. Pushing back the need to roll his eyes, Shadowclaw looked

back at the female, straightening as she looked back at him expectantly. Did she say something?

"What?" He asked, lost.

She flicked her tail. "I SAID are you going on the raid?" She prompted.

"Er, no I don't think so." The youngling said, in a little of a rush.

"Neither am I." Leafdapple said, nodding her head. A moment of silence followed, awkwardness and tension ruffling the air in between the two small dragons. Shadowclaw was just about to excuse himself, when the smaller girl interrupted once more. "So what do you think of this island? It sure isn't like our old home, right?" She let out a small laugh. "But I like it more, I guess. It's too bad not all of us are here, my old friend stayed back at the old home with his mother."

Shadowclaw perked, suddenly much more interested as he straightened to sit up as tall as he could manage. "We're not all here?" He asked, head whipping around to look over his shoulder. Now that he thought about it, there were a few distant faces he could grasp that weren't here. "They're back at the old home, why?"

"Some of them didn't want to terrorize the humans." Leafdapple explained, tugging out a piece of grass that was lodged in between her claws. "I probably would have stayed back if it hadn't been for my father. He's a big supporter of Nightflight. But I don't blame him, she is pretty powerful. And pretty too." She laughed slightly at this, looking over at Shadowclaw as if she thought he was going to laugh as well. But the dragon was too deep in thought, eyes narrowed to slits as he stared at the ground.

"Uhh—are you okay?" Leafdapple asked, prodding them male gently with her paw.

Not answering her question, Shadowclaw turned to her, green eyes locking with her green eyes. "Do you know the way back to the old island?" He demanded thinly, eyes flashing with something close to being desperate. When the girl didn't reply for a moment, he pressed once more. "I said, do you know how to get back to the old island!" He said, louder this time.

"Y-Yeah." Leafdapple said, eyes wide as saucers. "â€|I-It's not that far from here, I think."

"Show me." Shadowclaw demanded, not making it a question.

[illegible]

Hiccup stood in the clearing, the light of the flickering torches casting an orange glow over the village. Though nightfall was beginning to come, the son of the chief could still see the dragons below, still hard at work. Among them was Toothless and Mistyeyes, the sharp black and soft gray scales Hiccup was able to pick out from where he stood. The two were working close together, it was obvious that whatever fight they had started together had ended.

Though the sight made Hiccup feel a little left out, childish the thought may be. Wincing inwardly, Hiccup raised up a hand, rubbing his head roughly as another shock of pain lanced up his spine. The headache had been ringing in his head for the past few days, and no matter what he did, he couldn't find a way to get rid of the shockwaves that went over him randomly. He sighed to himself, green eyes downcast as he looked back at the village. The fact that his father didn't listen to him didn't really help his mood either. All in all, whatever was going on right now was not in Hiccup's favor. It was just like old times, when nothing went his way.

Shaking off the thoughts, Hiccup looked back at the dragons down below. "They're really getting serious about this." He mumbled, craning his neck to look over on his shoulder, where Ludi was clinging. The cat let out a meow in reply, her claws buried into her human's limb frantically. Despite the reasoning Hiccup had tried, Ludi was too stubborn to let go, ears lied flat against her head as her blue eyes sparkled with determination to stay on her usual perch.

"Maybe I should try and help them." He said aloud, no other person in the village to hear him talking to himself. The other people had retired to their own homes, leaving the square deserted and empty other than himself. Ludi blinked, straightening for a heartbeat before she pushed off of Hiccup's shoulder, landing on the ground with a small thud. Glancing back at him, she raised her tail straight into the air, padding delicately over the grass and down to where the dragons were gathered.

Smiling to himself, Hiccup followed the cat, trailing after her loosely as he went down the hill cautiously. Though he had almost mastered his fake leg, going down hills and such still proved a task he had to think about hard as he did it. Ludi seemed to do it with ease though, hopping and prancing back and forth over the plain, stopping every so often to look up into the air at the night sky. Her tail tip twitched back and forth, like she was intent on something. But she was Ludi, it was probably nothing.

Finally, the two came to a stop amid the bustling dragons, Hiccup turning and weaving in order to stay out of the way of the busy dragons. He recognized all of them of course, Meatlug, Stormfly. They were all hard-working, not giving a second thought as to why they were following orders from Mistyeyes, who had arrived only a few short weeks ago. Nevertheless, thinking about it, her plans did make sense, and they were the best of plans the dragons could work with as of now.

Stormfly was talking to the group she was in charge of, the Nadder gesturing back to the hill. "So if the time does come in need of retreat, just grab up as many humans as you can. I made a trail that goes all the way back to Raven's Point. If the humans try and refuse to retreat, here's what you all need to do. It's pretty easy, you shouldn't worry too much, but they are Vikings. They have stubbornness issues. Anyway-"

Mistyeyes and Toothless sat in the middle of it all, watching the others work and making sure they did it all right. Mistyeyes was looking with concern at the dragons in charge of guarding the island, gaze slightly worried. But the group was making do with what they had

pretty well, eels lined across the edge of the island neatly. Most of the dragons were pulling faces, the smell making them work faster in order to finish early and leave the stink. Though Hiccup couldn't smell anything, he could only imagine that the dragons were going through in order to stay this close to the eels. Especially the ones working with them, who were pulling some particularly disgusted faces.

"I didn't know there were that many eels on Berk." Hiccup said, coming to a stop by the two Night Furies.

Toothless flattened his ears, eyeing the fish with disdain. "Neither did I." He growled.

Glancing over at the Night Fury, Hiccup felt guilt like an arrow pierce his heart. Looking at the ground for a moment, Hiccup mumbled to his friend. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you earlier. I was confused." Looking back up, he directed his gaze onto Mistyeyes. "I guess you had to find out from her then." Mistyeyes flicked her ears, looking as though she wanted to say something, but she kept her mouth closed. Turning away, she got up, heading over to the group that was in charge of protecting the island. She would leave this conversation between the two of them.

"Actually, no." Hiccup blinked with surprise, looking over at Toothless with a lost expression on his face. The Night Fury looked amused as he looked down at his human. "I found out just now actually." Pausing a moment, he added. "I kind of guessed at first, though. Dragon's intuition I guess, I was right." He looked back at him. "Don't worry though. If I were you, I would have done the same thing."

Hiccup hummed out an agreement, looking back over at Mistyeyes. The Night Fury was jabbing at one of the eels, pushing it slowly over to where it had to be. Obviously it rolled out of the way and the other dragons refused to try and move it back. The female had a look of irritation on her face, aided by annoyance. But you could tell by the fluttering of her wings that she was proud to have to do this as well. It was the finishing touches on it, after all.

Hiccup opened his mouth to say something, but snapped it shut as he grimaced. Toothless straightened, eyes widening as he saw Hiccup's distressed look. "What's wrong, Hiccup?" He demanded, eyes shining with surprise and worry. The Viking held his head, both eyes closed as pain vibrated through him.

"Uh-" Cracking open one eye, he realized Ludi was looking at him rather grimly, not at all as surprised as Toothless was. "I gotta go! Stay here." He added quickly, turning around and breaking out into an uneven run. Despite the fact that he had told Toothless to stay, the dragon did not listen to him of course, the dragon breaking off after him. Ludi flattened her ears, glancing back at the sky once more, her expression changing from grimness to a cold look of dread.

Head ringing with pain, Hiccup ducked behind a random house, pressed his back up against the wood with a thump. Ducking his head down to his forehead pressed on his knees, the boy's hands clenched together, shaking with the amount of suppressed pain coursing through him. Like an aid for his headache, a small whisper started in his head. "She

took him away from you." It whispered, smooth and almost sounding like it was comforting him. "She's a liar and a cheat, a dragon hardly worthy to be in Berk at all, wouldn't you say?"

"N-No." He managed to choke out, teeth grinding together.

"Why not?" The voice asked, slightly put out. "After all, who is she to barge in and start ordering people around? She's like a virus, pretty soon all the dragons will think they're all high and mighty. We wouldn't want that happening, would we?" Hiccup let out a small cry of pain. "All it will take is one little hit. One little stab. Then you'll be rid of her for good, she'll never bother you again." Hiccup felt himself jerk forward, as if to get up. Flattening himself to the wall, Hiccup inhaled sharply, tense and stiff as he fought to keep himself back. "Come now, why fight? Here's the deal. You get rid of the female, and your village won't burn down in flames."

"Hiccup?"

The boy snapped his eyes open, pain leaving for a brief moment as he looked back at the voice, eyes wide. Astrid stood in front of him, blue eyes showing both anger at him and slight worry. "â€|What are you doing in the back of my house?" The girl asked, miffed as she looked down at him. Her eyebrow raised. "Is everything okay? You look a littleâ€|" She paused, searching him. "â€|weird."

He jerked once more, feeling like he was going to throw up. Launching himself forward, Hiccup grabbed hold of Astrid's shoulders, gripping them tightly. The girl opened her mouth to yell at him, but his eyes were so filled with strange panic, she snapped them shut. "Astrid, you have to help me!" Hiccup begged. "I don't know what's wrong with me, you-" His words were drowned out by a loud burst that sounded like an explosion.

Both of them turned, eyes wide. Yellow light of fire filled the entire village, lighting up the night sky and booming with an explosion loud enough to wake the gods. Black shapes moving in the sky told tales of Nightfuries. Flames upon Flames rained down on the village of Berk, Astrid's startled scream inaudible over the roar. But Hiccup couldn't pay attention. The only thought in his mind was a sickening one.

They were back.

And this time, they wouldn't leave until every single person was dead.

[illegible]

A/N: There you go :)

Anybody going to Natsucon in Collinsville Illinois?

If you live close by, you should! I'm going, and I'd love to see you all if you're coming!

Toothless jerked at the loud alarm call of a Nadder, green eyes flying wide as he whipped around to look out over the roaring waves that were slapping against the cliffs of Berk. Sure enough, a large cloud of Night Furies were rushing down towards the island, Toothless able to see the green glinting of their eyes from where he stood. Head spinning, he looked over at Mistyeyes, alarm and shock written over his face. He hadn't expected an attack here so soon! Were the other dragons even ready? Somehow, Toothless didn't think so, which only made another cold thorn of dread stab into his heart.

"Mistyeyes, what do we do?" A voice rose over the wailing and shocked mummers of the other dragons around them. Stormfly pushed herself forward, eyes wide and anxious as she searched the female's face rapidly. Mistyeyes looked lost for a moment, looking wildly down at the ground as though it would give her answers. But the grass between her feet just waved slightly in the wind, not giving her any help whatsoever. Eyes snapping shut, Mistyeyes tried to recollect her thoughts, pushing them all together as fast as she could.

Snapping them back open once more, Mistyeyes tilted her head up to look at the sky, ridden with storm clouds. A rumble of thunder rolled over the landscape, and the Night Fury waited until it had passed, getting to her feet and raising her voice so the others could hear it as well. "The Night Furies aren't going to stop for some little barrier of eels! That was what its purpose was in the first place, only a distraction!" She called out, confusion riddling over the faces of the dragons around her. "It will only put them off for a short amount of time. We need to make the best of this moment!" Pausing, she looked over at the village square, the first of the Vikings coming outside, shocked yells rising up like a cloud around them.

"You all know your jobs!" Mistyeyes snapped, coming out more irritated than she had meant it to. "Do them and hopefully we can pull through! If you're confused or lost, just follow some of the others! Just stick to your positions! We won't let these Night Furies get the best of us! Isn't that right?" The last words rose into a howl that seemed to echo right alongside the thunder. The other dragons seemed to draw confidence from her, determined cheers meeting her words. The others immediately shot to their feet, turning and racing around one another, weaving and pushing to get out of the crowd and where they were supposed to be.

Mistyeyes watched with a slightly empty expression, wondering grimly if she had just sent them all to their death. But she had no other time to feel guilty, Toothless bursting through the panicked-moving crowd of dragons. His green eyes clashed with her blue ones, and Mistyeyes realized that they were filled with a strange sense of calm. "This is it, then?" Toothless asked, all his familiar sense of humor gone in the moment. "It's either them or us, right? Whichever one wins?"

The female glanced up at the sky, watching with a sick expression as the swarm of night-cloaked dragons got closer and closer. "It seems like it." She whispered, looking back anxiously at Toothless. For a moment, she wondered if he had heard her at all, her quiet voice seeming to melt back into the shouting crowd that milled around her. But the Night Fury's gaze was clear as he stared intently at her, and

Mistyeyes knew for a fact that no matter what, he had heard her through the roar of the crowd.

Pushing his way forward, Toothless came closer to her, eyes wide and anxious as he searched her own gaze. "What do we do?" He asked, having to raise his voice to a roar in order to be heard. Mistyeyes searched her brain frantically for something to say in response to his words, and yet she came up blank. Eyes round pools of confusion, she looked helplessly up at Toothless, unable to answer his question. She merely flicked her tail aimlessly, looking back up at the sky a little hesitantly. The swarm of the Night Furies were nearing, and yet their speed had slowed somewhat, as if they had just caught the first few whiffs from the eels lining the edge of Berk. That was their only time window before everything would explode, Mistyeyes was sure of it.

Doing her best to steel herself, she straightened, looking around with a new perspective. The Vikings were already streaming out of their houses, no doubt roused by the alarm calls that the dragons were now yelling into the night sky. They were just getting over the initial shock of the random fleet of dragons shooting down towards the island. The eels were losing effect, Mistyeyes realized grimly. Her eyes immediately drilled down to the leader of the Tribe, Stoick. The man looked more worried than normal, scanning the crowd with an anxious sort of expression as he managed to shout out orders at the same time.

Toothless seemed to notice it first, though, whirling around to look at his friend with wide eyes. "Hiccup." He said, eyes flashing up to look at the oncoming Night Furies with a new kind of anger. The word brought a memory of what had happened with the boy just a few moments before everything picked up. The dragon frowned, blue eyes flickering with shadows as she stared in the direction that Hiccup had gone. Something had been different about the boy, she decided. She wasn't sure what it was, but she found it rather odd that he left right before the other Night Furies got here. It might have been a weird coincidence, but Mistyeyes wasn't sure. Something was wrong.

But she was just as worried about Hiccup as Toothless was, there was no trying to deny that part of it all. Giving a firm nod to Toothless, she turned, remembering at the last moment about the cat. The thing that Hiccup called "Ludi". The was right, right? The little thing was looking up at her with wide eyes that resembled an owl's. It looked a little wary of her, and that much was expected, of course. But glancing the way Hiccup had gone, the cat let out a defiant meow, which was lost in the chaos. Springing to its feet, the cat leaped up before Mistyeyes could do anything, landing lightly to perch on Mistyeyes's back. Pausing a moment to make sure the small tabby was secure, she turned, nodding once at Toothless. The dragon looked at the cat dubiously for a moment, but didn't say anything against her being there.

After a few moments of hesitation, Mistyeyes shot forward, taking off at a run and racing back the way Hiccup had gone. She was sure that the others could hold out without her, they could take care of themselves. She wasn't a leader here, she was just somebody to start the spark. There were no leaders here, and maybe that was one of the many things that Mistyeyes liked about this place. _Too bad it's going to get burned to the ground._ Her sub-conscious said, only a little bit sarcastic. Baring her teeth, she shook it off roughly,

forcing herself not to listen to that voice. Everything would be fine.

Glancing over at Toothless, she blurted out the first thing that she thought of. "What if he's not okay?" She asked, remembering the last time that the two had set off looking for Hiccup.

Toothless didn't answer her.

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Astrid was stiff, rigid as she whirled back around to face Hiccup, slapping his hands out of the way as she did so. Her blue eyes were almost accusing, as if this thing were his fault. It took a moment for Hiccup to be able to hear her through the mind-splitting pain going through him head, but he managed to finally come out of it for a moment, fuzzy eyes focusing on her face as best they could. "â€|going on?" Astrid was demanding, blue eyes narrowed as she glared at Hiccup hotly. But behind her angered look, a trace of fear was there as well, she was backtracking, as if she were anxious. She looked up at the sky once more, the Night Furies were getting closer by the minute.

When Hiccup failed to respond, Astrid shook herself roughly, as if swiping away a stubborn dream. "Hiccup, what are you doing back here? The Village needs help, if you haven't noticed so far." Casting another look up at the sky, she turned, breaking into a run as she started to round the house. Another jolt of pain shot up through Hiccup's head, and before he could stop himself, he lunged forward once again, grabbing Astrid's hand and yanking her back over to him.

Astrid immediately yelled with pain, wrenching her hand away from his as she whirled around, glaring at him. "Hiccup, what in Thor's name!" She hollered, face puckering into the same expression she always had when she was angry. And -a little regretfully- Hiccup was all-too familiar with the look. Besides Snotlout, he always figured that Astrid reserved a large number of those looks specially for him before they actually tried to make contact with one another. "You're acting weird! What's wrong with you?"

"I don't know." Hiccup mumbled, almost to himself. His hand clenched where it rested at his side, and looking at Astrid now, it was all the boy could do to hold himself back. Back from—he didn't know what, exactly. "Look, Astrid, something isn't right. I don't know what it is, but I—" He broke off, turning at the sound of rapid, thundering footsteps heading closer. Toothless and Mistyeyes were racing up the hill, eyes sweeping the place around them, which was rapidly filling up with more and more Vikings, who were getting ready for battle. Immediately, Hiccup shot back, accidentally hitting the back of his head against the wall as he flattened himself against the wood of the house. It took a few minutes, but eventually, Toothless and Mistyeyes turned to go look somewhere else. Any other time, and Hiccup would have noticed how worried Toothless looked.

"What's going on?" Astrid asked icily, for the umpteenth time, it seemed. But now there was real worry in her eyes as she looked at Hiccup. It seemed like the fight was momentarily forgotten in the moment. Or maybe it was forgotten altogether. Her blue eyes rarely

ever showed anything but calm coolness, a level-headed kind of gaze that pieced the whole girl together. But now they were a little darker than usual, searching out Hiccup's own troubled expression. "Did something happen?" She asked, her voice a little softer now.

Gritting his teeth together, Hiccup wrenched his gaze away from her's. "â€œNever mind." He muttered, closing his eyes.

"â€¦Hiccup?" Astrid asked, a little hesitant.

Pushing himself off of the wall, Hiccup turned quickly, changing directions and rushing back over towards the woods that lined the edge of village. Astrid tried running after him, calling out his name as she did so. But even from where Hiccup was, he could hear her father intercept her, giving her a weapon with stern words. She was trying to object to it, but that was as much Hiccup heard. He broke through the foliage, stumbling over himself in his haste. Uneven footsteps the only noise by now, the boy followed the familiar track that he always used to go when visiting Toothless. It seemed like a long time ago when he was keeping Toothless with him in secret. But nevertheless, it seemed to be the only way he could go.

It was the only place he could think of in his hazy state of mind. He didn't even know if he was going the right way or not for sure. He was just guessing. With his luck, he would end falling face-first into the ocean, sinking into it with enough slapping noise to even make the Night Furies cringe. There was another thing. From what his father had told him last time they'd actually spoke together, it looked like the Village of Berk was now not only defending their land. They were going to actually try and kill the Night Furies. Which was impossible, nobody had ever beaten a Night Fury before. Except for Hiccup himself, of course, but that was a really confusing set of circumstances. He didn't count it. Or at least, he didn't think he counted it.

Skidding to a halt, Hiccup panted, trying to catch his breath. Bending over slightly, he held his hands tightly on his knees, wincing to himself as he wheezed and gasped. Blinking, he turned, looking back the way he had come. Nobody had followed him, and no dragons either. Which was good as well. If a dragon came to meet him out here, he would probably just die out of the pure shock of it, he'd have no chance. No exaggerating. But still, there was only the still-rustling leaves in his wake, the undergrowth disturbed where he had ran. It was a little eerie, Hiccup rubbing his arms with a small frown as he realized he was alone.

But that was the way it needed to be. Mouth set in a firm line, the Chief's son sat down slowly, uncomfortably. His head rung with pain at every movement, and when he finally got to sit down, it was all he could attempt to do to sit up straight and not fall over. His stomach twisted and turned, but he did his best to ignore it. Drawing a knee up to his chest, he rested his head down on that, in hopes of the headache to go away.

But as he sat there, listening to the faint sounds of fighting getting louder and louder in the distance, the feeling only worsened.

[illegible]

The Night Furies finally got to their senses rushing forward in accordance with their plan that they had gone through extensively beforehand. But by this time, the element of surprise had been stripped away, the Vikings already out in the clearing, firing great big balls of fire and rocks up in attempts of knocking dragons out of the sky. Maybe even grounding them. Nightflight didn't see how that would affect them, though. They were Night Furies, they were just as dangerous on the ground as they were in the air. The female hovered in the sky, eyes narrowed into slits as she surveyed the land. The land that was about to be scorched pitch-black, beyond recognition.

Her forces rushed past her, making care not to even brush by her as they charged downwards. The dragon did not even move. One dragon stopped beside her, of course. The only one that she would pretty much allow to be with her for long periods of time. Fleetfoot glanced over at her, questions in his eyes. "Are you coming?" He prompted, eyes searching her own. "It wouldn't be much of an attack without you at the head." Usually Nightflight led everything, even things that didn't need leading. For the dragon to stand back and let everyone go first was an odd thing for her to do.

But her gaze was unwavering when she turned to look back at him. "I am going to look for somebody important." She said stiffly, not giving him a moment to object before she went on. "I want you to be in charge of the attack until I return. Make sure there are no humans left unharmed. We are taking this island, use as much more force than needed. I want this place reeking of human blood before the sun rises." Her eyes narrowed even more at the last few words, claws tensing into tight curls. Fleetfoot paused a moment, staring at her intently. But then a glint entered his eye, and he dipped his head in a nod.

"It will be done." He promised, a malicious tone creeping into his voice.

Nightflight did not reply, merely waiting until Fleetfoot turned neatly, diving down to the island. Which left her alone in the sky, the beating of her wings the only noise in that moment. She was so high up, he could barely hear the noises of the fight below, but they were progressively getting louder and louder. It wouldn't take long before it would be in full-swing. And then the humans would have no chance. She didn't know anything about numbers in the other side against her's, but Night Furies counted as at least ten other dragons in one. This battle would not be one they lost.

"Now, where are you, little human?" She murmured to herself, eyes scanning the ground below. The island was like a small pinprick beneath her, and yet she could tell exactly where the little twig was. She figured that that would be his new name, according to her. She thought it suited very well. Green eyes flashing darkly, she let out a small hum of victory. "You thought you could hide in your little forest, did you?" Spreading her wings out to their full span, Nightflight angled herself down neatly, with far too much grace for any dragon to have, it seemed. She made no noise, blending into the night like a stick bug did with the ground. She was virtually unnoticeable.

But if you could have seen her, you would have noticed the pain brimming in her eyes, the small crease of emotion across her face. The dragon was hurt, that much was certain. She growled under her breath as she shot down to the ground full speed, reckless and rash with her movements in flying. "You'll regret it." She whispered to herself, voice cracking with emotion. "You'll regret breaking my heart. You don't know what it feels like." She paused a moment, changing direction as she landed on the sharp grass of the island. She was at the edge of it, close to the forest. An orange light seemed to radiate off of the village up ahead, the first wisps of smoke rising into the air. The grass was black, still charred from the last attack. The thought only made Nightflight angrier. "I'll show you." She snarled deep in her throat. "I'll show you the hurt that you put me through."

And with that, the dragon turned sharply, stalking into the forest.

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Ludi was having a tough time clinging properly onto Mistyeyes's back. It was far too rough, she was bouncing all over the place. Her head was rattling, and her eyesight was shaking up and down rapidly. The cat looked frazzled, tail bushed up to be twice its normal size than it usually was. But the dragon didn't let up. Her and Toothless had split up a while ago to find Hiccup, and that only increased the darn thing's speed. The dragon was racing back and forth, keeping to the edge of the village in hopes of staying out of the fight. It was only after a few minutes she slowed down.

"Oh no!" She breathed. It was clear in her voice that her heart was sinking as she spoke.

Ludi perked, turning and half-falling, half-jumping off of her back to be on the ground. The cat's intelligent blue eyes immediately landed on the first dragon she saw, her ears slicking backwards in surprise. Toothless was fighting against another Night Fury, the two seeming to be evenly matched. They were squaring it off, lashing back and forth with claws drawn out in long curves. It seemed like he couldn't stay out of the fight for long. And it was apparent Mistyeyes could not either. The female seemed to know this by now.

"I have to go help him." She said, voice strong with feeling. Ludi turned, not all that surprised, but still wary about where Hiccup could have gone. The Night Fury turned after a moment's hesitation, trusting blue eyes resting on the small ball of fluff. "Will you find Hiccup?" She demanded, eyes flicking over to Toothless even as she spoke. Ludi didn't know how far dragon fights go, but it looked like Toothless was losing by a hair. She also wasn't a really, super smart cat, but she figured that a cat in substitute for a dragons wasn't really all that fair. But Mistyeyes seemed to think it was perfectly fine.

The Night Fury rushed her tail softly over Ludi's fluffy fur before spinning around, leaping forward into the fight, claws extended. Ludi stared after her, startled. What just happened? Stunned and confused, the cat did a full circle, panicking. She was a cat, not a dragon! The most she could do would be give a dragon a semi-decent scratch,

right? How hard were their scales? She knew next to nothing about dragons! She sat there for a moment, crouched in a bush so deeply that she would not be seen by anybody, swamped in confusion and self-blame.

But then something moved in the corner of her eye, the cat sitting straight up, eyes gleaming in the dark. It was a dragon, she realized. A Night Fury. It was a female, slinking into the forest with an expression that meant bad news. Blinking, the cat turned, looking for Toothless or Mistyeyes. But the two were nowhere to be seen. The dragon was going after something, that much was certain. Ludi saw that same look in the faces of the Village children when they were reaching for candy or things of that nature. Greed, or something along the lines of it. That dragon was up to something.

It was a stupid decision, but it was only one that Ludi could come up with at the moment.

The cat turned, crouching low to the ground with her tail streaming out lightly behind her to keep herself from either falling or making noise. And she then followed the dragon into the forest, hot on their trail.

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A/N: I'm a freshman now, and getting used to high school. I also have marching band every day after school from two to five. So I don't have a lot of free time. I also have another story going on, so there's another reason. The updates WILL be slower, but I'll have more time to think and plan out chapters, so it's sort of good. Just be patient, whenever I have little slice of free-time, I'm usually typing or writing, I can promise you that. So just, remember that.
:3

21. Chapter 21

A/N: Okay, sorry for the break (again XD)

I am back~! :I AND REARING TO TYPE! FYI: My updates will always be slow now, I'm pretty sure. Pretty packed up here adjusting to High School :P

You all remember when we had that contest in people's theme songs? I just found the most amazing one for Nightflight (if you don't count that it's a guy singing) it's called: "Lost in You" by Three Day's Grace. It's SUCH a good song. And if you want, Toothless's song in the other story could be "I'm not the one" Just some food for thoughtâ€|

I think that Some Nights describe the whole dang two books XDD (that song helped me decide to keep going with my story, BTW)

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Toothless swiped away a Night Fury almost twice his size, feeling energy and anger coursing through his bloodstream. Mistyeyes let out a threatening growl, ears slicked back against her head as she let

out an angered yowl. The dragon hesitated a moment, narrowed eyes sizing up both Toothless and Mistyeyes. Then it seemed to realize that this wasn't a fight it could win. The dragon snuffed out an angered huff, turning tail and racing back into the thick of things, brushing low to the burning ground until it was hidden in the mass of other fighting dragons. Toothless watched him go, heaving for air as he suddenly realized how tired he was getting.

Mistyeyes let out a sharp yelp, causing Toothless to rouse back to attention, turning with a panicked look to the female. "Ludi is gone!" The dragon wailed, blue eyes wide with distress as she turned back over to him. Her gray scales gleamed in the light of the slowly-growing fires, and Toothless tried to remember how to talk calmly. But before he could say anything, Mistyeyes went on in a rush. "She was Hiccup's cat, he loved her! What are we going to tell him now!"

"It'll be fine!" Toothless yelled, looking around wildly for the small ball of fluff. But Mistyeyes was right, there wasn't anything there. Only smoldering grass. He looked up, surveying the area around them with narrowed eyes, a small growl in his throat. The Vikings were already losing, it wasn't a contest. At all. Toothless could see Snotlout and Hookfang, charging for a Night Fury that was scratching its way through a door, trying to get inside one of the houses. Ruffnut and Tuffnut were on water, apparently, swooping in every so often to dump water down to the ground in desperate hopes of dashing out the fire. Toothless didn't see Meatlug or Fishlegs—that was probably for the best right now.

But what Toothless also didn't see was Hiccup. And that troubled him more than words could describe. Toothless was Hiccup's dragon, he was supposed to be there for him whenever the boy needed him to be. And for what seemed like an eternity, Toothless hadn't been there for the boy. Shame hot as boiling water swamped over him, causing him to dig his claws tight into the ground. "We have to find Hiccup." He growled, a little angrier than he meant to. Mistyeyes didn't reply, starting, eyes widening for a moment. Before Toothless could ask what it was, the dragon ducked low to the ground, a Night Fury sailing over her.

It had mistimed its pounce, tumbling across the ground to a dazed sprawl on the ground. "Right." Mistyeyes straightened, not looking fazed at all from her dodge. Toothless didn't wait either, pushing off of the ground and sailing up into the sky, feeling the heated air slowly get a little cooler the farther up he went. Mistyeyes was right behind him, the gray dragon eyeing Toothless's fake tailfin with worry. It was obvious that she didn't trust Hiccup's handiwork. But it was working perfectly. Toothless didn't even feel the familiar pang of guilt that he usually got whenever he flew without Hiccup's help. But he kept this tail for a reason, and there wasn't any way he was going to give it up just yet.

"Where do you think they are?" Mistyeyes finally managed, the two coming to a hover in midair. Toothless scanned the ground below, trying to ignore the swell of anger in his chest from the houses down on the island. Hiccup was and always will be his main source of concern, no matter what any of the other villagers thought. But the boy was nowhere to be seen, that much was certain. Swallowing back a cry of anguish, Toothless forced himself to stay calm.

He turned back over, swinging his head to look back at Mistyeyes fixedly. "We have to find him."

He was expecting an objection from the dragon, something like: "We don't have time to run around, the village is in danger, you idiot!" But her blue eyes were clear as they bored into his own, and Toothless could swear that she could understand everything that Toothless wasn't saying. After a moment's silence, the dragon dipped her head slowly. "I know." She said, locking eyes once more.

In that moment, the village seemed to melt away, Toothless's troubles washing away in the split instant that Mistyeyes looked at him. Her eyes were determined, staring intently at Toothless, and the dragon knew that the female would follow him into whatever kind of danger he threw himself into. For a moment, Toothless forgot what they were trying to do. He just wanted to stay here and look into Mistyeyes's clear blue depths until this whole mess was over, all the danger and overhanging doubts.

But then a swirl of memories shoved their way into his head, cutting through his fantasy. Claws glinting in the darkness, bared teeth gleaming back at him. Penetrating green eyes, a whispering voice filling his head with muddled thoughts. Hiccup's frightened and hurt face. Blood glistening like a red river, bathing over Toothless's own paws. He shut his eyes tightly, whirling around and shooting forward, barely even hearing Mistyeyes's shocked yell. He wouldn't do it. Couldn't do it. Not again.

He wouldn't let himself.

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A cracking twig isn't a loud noise, right? Well, take into account that it's nearly pitch black if you don't count the faint glow of fires. And that you're alone in the middle of the woods. And that you know there are probably a million dragons running around that probably won't be too kind to you if they catch you around here. Take all that into your mind, right now. Twig wouldn't scare you? Yeah, right. It scared the living daylights out of Hiccup. The forest was so quiet in the middle of the night, the small little noise made the boy start up, hands flailing as he fell, unbalanced, to the ground.

Pushing himself up, Hiccup scrambled to his feet, drawing out the knife that was always strapped to his side, holding it shakily in front of him, eyes narrowed as he looked hard at the place the noise had come from. The action threatened to literally kill his stomach, which buckled and reared at the small hint of movement, it seemed. But he shook his ringing head to clear it. Mind over matter. It didn't matter, it didn't matter. He just wouldn't pay attention to it. What he wanted to know was what the noise had come from. Eyes narrowed, a small, nervous frown on his face, he started to shuffle forward.

"Are you sure you want to do that?" A voice asked from behind him.

The boy jumped, knife clattering to the ground as he spun around. At first, he didn't see anything in the darkness of the forest, the

first hint that going into the forest wasn't a smart idea. But then there was a glint of familiar-looking green eyes, and for a moment, Hiccup relaxed. Straightening, he blew out a breath, a nervous-looking smile spreading over his face. "Toothless, you scared me." He mumbled, trying to banish the trembles that had started to travel up his spine.

The eyes merely blinked back at him slowly, and Hiccup's smile started to waver. The dragon crept forward, stepping into the small square of weak light provided by the moon. At once, Hiccup backtracked, keeping the same distance between them cautiously, fumbling down and gripping his knife once more. The dragon was defiantly not Toothless, it was much more slender, more graceful as it paced forward, green eyes gleaming with a different kind of light than Toothless's own.

It was a familiar dragon, but it wasn't one that Hiccup wanted to see at all.

It was Nightflight.

"Foolish boy." Nightflight cooed, stalked forward, tail lashing the overhanging plants in her wake. "You look as though you expected somebody else." Hiccup narrowed his eyes, but kept his mouth shut firmly, trying to keep his vision straight through his headache. Wobbling slightly on his legs, Hiccup stumbled as he backtracked, recovering with a clumsy-looking scramble. Nightflight took this moment to dash forward closer, green eyes boring into Hiccup's own by the time that the boy managed to recover. The boy froze at the sight of the large orbs right in front of his own, and the dragon let out a soft coo of a laugh, eyes flashing. "Oh, Hiccup, why didn't you listen to me before? It would have saved you so much heartache."

Hiccup gritted his teeth together for a moment, cursing himself as the words that were going through his head wouldn't come out. Nightflight inched closer, and (much against anything he would have rather done) Hiccup lashed out with his knife, nearly cutting across the dragons snout. She reared back just in time, jerking backwards like he had slapped her away. Hiccup was holding the weapon so tight that his knuckles were bleached pale, and he tried to put on a face that his father usually wore when Hiccup broke something around the house or made another one of his stupid mistakes. The kind of look that said: Look, sometimes I don't want to, but I swear, if you do that again one more time, I'm going to do something I'll regret ten seconds later.

Usually that look was enough to send him running out of the house with a quick excuse.

But Nightflight didn't even move at his look, making the boy wonder whether he was doing it right or not. But then she spoke up once again, Hiccup wincing as she did so. It felt like her words were drumming on the insides of his head. "Oh, Hiccup, I know." She said sympathetically, as if Hiccup had done nothing but stare at her sadly. The boy's forehead creased, and he opened his mouth to say something, but Nightflight went on, giving him no time to say anything else. "It must feel terrible to get left behind, but from what I've heard, you're used to that, is that right?"

Hiccup was caught off-guard this, blinking as he relaxed in his grip slightly. "What?"

"We've both been left by the same person, haven't we?" Nightflight prompted, slinking forward once again. This time, Hiccup didn't react, staring blankly in front of him as he tried to figure out what she was saying. His mind was as slow as syrup falls, even though he was trying to make a mental effort to speed it up. Nightflight had wound herself around him, eyes narrowed into small slits as she looked up at him. "We were both left by the one we hold close to our hearts. And both times, he has left us for another, isn't that right?" Hiccup stiffened at this, but could not say anything, whether it was out of fear or shock that it rang so close to the truth. "Was it the truth? Hiccup couldn't remember.

"Toothless didn't even try and stay with either of us, did he?" Nightflight went on, voice soft, with almost a musical kind of quality. "He just left us behind. Like we were mere trash on the ground. I know it hurts now, it always does. But I'm telling you this: come with me, and you will never get left behind again." Hiccup blinked blearily, like he was just waking up, turning his head slowly to look down at Nightflight. The dragon was drawing herself up, looming over him now, eyes blazing with a new kind of fire. When the boy didn't say anything, she repeated her words, a little firmer, now. "Come with me, and soon you'll never have to worry about ANYTHING ever again."

Hiccup finally got control of his legs, starting to stumble backwards, feeling as though he was weighted down with lead. "N-No!" He managed, realizing that he had dropped his knife over back by Nightflight. Cursing himself over and over mentally, Hiccup increased his speed, shuffling backwards like he was on ice, trying to regain his balance. "You Toothless-

"Left you for that pathetic excuse of a dragon!" Nightflight cut short, growling audibly by now. "Left you in the dust without a second thought, without a backwards glance! Left you for dead, thinking that he would never see you ever again, that he was FREE from you! Left you for a HUMAN!" Hiccup closed his eyes tightly, clapping his hands over his ears with a flinch. Her voice had rose into a scream, bouncing back and forth and hitting through every inch of his head.

"Stop! Please!" Hiccup yelled, squinting his eyes open to look at her. "I don't know-

"Of course you don't." Nightflight growled, reverting back to her whispering voice in less than a heartbeat. Her green eyes smoldered into Hiccup, and even through the haze of pain, Hiccup realized that there was something in the glitter of her eyes. Swallowing back a lump in his throat, he made a move for the knife that lay on the ground. "You don't know." Nightflight repeated sourly. "But you will, I will make sure of it." With that, she leaped forward, claws shooting out as well as her fangs. Hiccup gasped sharply, dropping to the ground and rolling away quickly, grass and rocks sticking to him as he did so. Shooting up, the boy watched as Nightflight shot to her feet, whipping around to look at him, fuming.

The dragon turned, stalking forward slowly, deliberately. Hiccup was a sitting duck, rooted to the ground, paralyzed. His eyes were wide,

his chest heaving for breath, up and down as fast as a hummingbird's wings swept up and down. "You ruined everything." The dragon snarled, eyes dilated with hatred. "If it weren't for you, Toothless and I would still be together. Everything would be PERFECT!" Hiccup flattened himself to the ground as she yelled the last part. "But you had to come and ruin it all. Which is all humans do! I swear, I will rid this whole island of humans. I'll rid the whole WORLD of them!" She flattened to the ground, like a cat would do before it hops on its prey. "And I'll start with you." She growled, before leaping straight at him.

Hiccup threw himself to the side, stopping only inches away from Nightflight, who skidded on the ground, recovering rather gracefully as she avoided smashing into a tree. She leapt to her feet, eyes burning as she gathered herself up to spring once again. She let out an ear-splitting roar, and the reaction of it immediately sent waves of pure, white pain through Hiccup's head. It was so fast and sudden, he couldn't breathe, gasping in without taking air as he crumpled in on himself. He flattened himself to the ground, closing his eyes tightly in attempt to try and bat away the pain. He still groped the ground for his knife, desperately trying to make this fight at least a little bit more fairer.

Nightflight let out another roar, but this one was cut off abruptly, replaced instead, by a shrill yelping. Wildly, forcing himself through the pain, Hiccup snapped his eyes back open. Immediately, he forgot all about the pain, jaw dropping open at once, eyes widening. He didn't know whether to scream or to smile or to laugh. So he figured that he'd better do a mix of the three. The scene in front of him was just too weird not to do that exact thing.

Ludi was there, spitting mad. Ears slicked to her head, small teeth bared, a gruesome snarl coming from the seemingly-innocent cat. There was no sign that she was ever a lazy housecat that still refused to not sit on Hiccup's shoulder. She was wild now, claws out as she clung onto Nightflight's face. At first, Hiccup thought she was just focusing on blocking Nightflight's eyes for a moment. But then he realized how wrong he was. The cat was tearing her claws down Nightflight's eyes, somehow digging her claws in deep enough to break through even the scales. She was clawing the dragon's face off.

"Ludi!" Hiccup gasped, pushing himself backwards rapidly as blood started to stream down next to where he was laying. It was on his hands, shining dark scarlet in the weak moonlight. If Ludi heard him, she didn't show sign of it, continuing to swipe down Nightflight's face like she could go on forever. And it seemed to stretch on for that long. Nightflight let out a low keening noise, and even Hiccup had to flinch away from the awful noise. It sounded like the dragon was being ripped in half, from the noise she made. And then suddenly, Nightflight swung her head sharply to the side, Ludi flying away from the dragon with a tearing sound.

Hiccup gasped, lunging forward and catching the small cat before she could crash into the ground. The cat's fur was matted with red liquid, sticking to Hiccup even from just holding her in his arms. She seemed dazed, but still alive, which sent a rush of relief straight through Hiccup like an ocean wave. He held her close for a moment, burying his face into the fluff of her fur, the small section that wasn't affected by the scene that just played out. He let out a

sigh, murmuring a small, fervent thank-you. He knew that if Ludi hadn't sprang forward, he would be dead right now.

Nightflight let out another roar, making Hiccup startle. The dragon was stumbling around almost blindly, crashing into trees and stumbling over herself. Hiccup looked over his shoulder, starting to back away and into the woods. Maybe he could run back to the village before the dragon could manage to find him. But he overturned a rock as he slid backwards, the female whipping around as soon as the sound reached her ears. Hiccup jumped, eyes wide, ready to rush away. But Nightflight's wings shot out, propelling herself much faster than somebody like Hiccup could even try to think of going. She struck out with her claws, landing a surprising bull's-eye on the target, even without her eyesight. He underestimated this dragon way too much.

He screamed as soon as her curved claws met skin. They sunk into his shoulder so deep, he felt it scrape bone, could swear he heard it. He squeezed his eyes shut, feeling the dragon start to swoop upwards, into the sky. Her claws were in so deep, Hiccup didn't even move, dangling from her grasp limply, trying to breathe through the pain. His arms went numb, Ludi slipping from his grasp like she was a stick of butter. The cat plopped on the ground, looking alarmed as she stared up at the boy, eyes wide with distress. Through the thick of it all, Hiccup called down to her, voice choked. "Get Toothless!" He yelled, knowing that she would be able to do it.

But determination set in her eyes. With a leap that could have put even a dragon to shame, Ludi sprang up, sticking her own claws into Hiccup and climbing up the length of his back. He cried out at the stinging sensations, and Ludi let out a faint mewl that he supposed would be an apology. She managed to perform the feat without falling, which was good, because they were up in the air, already clearing the trees and coming into the night sky. The cat fit herself on Hiccup's shoulder, more or less laying across it on her stomach, eyes wide as they looked down dumbstruck at the ground as it shrunk.

There were hardly any dragons on this side of the island. Most of them were at the village, either protecting or destroying it. The party of dragons leading the children and old people away from the clearing hadn't been spotted yet. Hiccup could see their little forms crawling across the side of a mountain, towards the more shaded spot on the island, where they wouldn't be found for the most part. They were much too far away to try to help Hiccup. With a growing sense of panic, Hiccup realized that Nightflight couldn't see where she was going. She was going a entirely different direction than towards the other dragons. That, or she was purposely dragging Hiccup away from his home.

Either of the two proved difficult situations.

Panicked rushed up to his throat, cutting off his air. Shoulders stinging and burning, Hiccup looked down for any sight of his father, but came up with nothing. He couldn't even see Astrid. Couldn't look at her one last time. Would never get to apologize to her for yelling. He couldn't have helped it. Eyes burning, Hiccup resorted to the last thing he could possibly do. Something that he used to always do, back when he was 'Stoick's Little Embarrassment.' He opened his mouth, and screamed for help, desperation and anguish in every syllable of the word.

[illegible]

As soon as Toothless heard it, through all the commotion and yelling that was around him, he could hear the cry as clear as if the whole world had been silent. Whirling around, Toothless shot off without waiting for Mistyeyes, the female letting out a yelp as she stumbled through the air after him. "Did you hear him!" She yelled out, seeming a little disbelieving in her tone. But Toothless knew what he heard, and all he knew was that he had to get there before anything else could. But his stomach churned as he wondered what would happen if whatever it was already got there.

But as they zoomed away from the burning village, Toothless caught sight of it. A black shape streaking up into the sky, heading the opposite direction of the village, into the uncharted waters that was beyond their own territory. The form was so dark, that Toothless wouldn't have been able to catch sight of it, if not for the two things riding on it. Riding as in being taken by it. Hiccup swung dangerously from the dragons front claws, being carried like a Viking carried a sheep. He was still screaming for help, trying to get out the dragon's grip, but it proved useless. Something also hung onto the boy, Toothless closing his eyes tightly as he recognized the color. Ludi was there too. Of course.

Fear welled up in Toothless, and he pushed himself faster, he was a long way away from them, he could only hope to reach his human before it was too late. There was no doubt in his mind who was carrying Hiccup away from his home, and that meant that Toothless had to act fast. But he stopped dead, crashing into a Night Fury, who suddenly shot straight in Toothless's way, baring its teeth at the pair of dragons. It didn't even notice what was happening behind it, it seemed to only want to make Toothless and Mistyeyes stay longer at the island.

That was when Hiccup spotted both Toothless and Mistyeyes. The human and the dragon's gazes locked together, and in that moment, Toothless's heart broke. "TOOTHLESS!" Hiccup screamed, begging for help, for a way out of this. They were too far! They were getting too far! In a wild act of desperation and alarm, Toothless rushed forward, grabbing the dragon's head with his front claws and doing a large arc, letting go at the last moment. The dragon spun away like a top, wings splaying out in an attempt to free himself. Mistyeyes called out to Hiccup, blue eyes wide with helplessness as she looked around wildly. Toothless wondered what was wrong.

Until he looked back that way Hiccup had been going.

And saw nothing there anymore.

[illegible]

A/N: Any of you in marching band? I got a competition on Saturday at Lafayette. If you're in Missouri/Illinois (idk which) you should come up and watch the Francis Howell Central band. If you really are going, you can PM me and I'll tell you were I am in the show ;)

I hope I did good. I really had to rush, it's almost past my bedtime now, and I still gotta take a shower XDD

at the island. Toothless tried to push away his nagging worries about the village himself. He was much more worried about Hiccup.

The sight of his human had chilled his heart over a million times, Toothless hadn't remembered the last time he had been so frightened. And now, it was an effort to even breathe right, he was so startled. Hiccup had vanished along with Ludi and Nightflight, all heading off in a random direction, to a place where Toothless couldn't even fathom to guess. Shaking his head roughly in attempt of banishing the thought away, Toothless burst through the wall of clouds, stumbling into the center of the black clot clumsily. Whirling around, eyes wide, he opened his mouth widely, raising his voice into a shrill yell. "Hiccup!" He yelled desperately into the darkness. Mistyeyes was scanning the place as well, deciding that she might as well try and help if nothing else. The thought made a thrill of affection blossom in Toothless's chest. At least she wasn't leaving him behind, he figured.

There wasn't a response in the black. Breathing in and out much faster than normal, Toothless rushed forward, leaving Mistyeyes to flounder after him once again. "HICCUP!" Toothless screeched, voice cracking somewhat. Still, it was as silent save for the noises from the village. "Hiccup, please!" Toothless went on, wincing as he did so. "Answer me! Where are you!" Even as he yelled, Toothless knew that even if Hiccup answered, he wouldn't be able to hear him. He would be too far.

"â€|Toothless?" Mistyeyes whispered, swooping up behind him.

Toothless turned slowly, feeling like his chest had a huge, gaping hole in the front of it. His green eyes were filled with disbelief as he looked at her, and a million different things he could say rushed through his mind. If you didn't stop me, we would have made it. It's your fault that Hiccup's gone. This is all your fault. Why did you come here? Do you not care about Hiccup? Why didn't I stop him from running away? Am I really that stupid? Is this all my fault?

â€|Is this all my fault?

"It'll be fine." Mistyeyes promised, blue eyes burning into his. "He's Hiccup, he'll find a way out, I'm sure of it." Again, angered thoughts rushed into his head. You don't know Hiccup like I do, so stop pretending that you do. I've been with him longer. It's your fault that I haven't been with Hiccup much now. And why is that? Is it my fault? "And as soon as the island is safe, we can look for him, I promise." Mistyeyes said, eyeing the clouds around them. "It'll be clearer by then, no smoke or anything to get in our way. We can find him."

"How do you know?" Toothless said lowly, eyes wide and round. The anger had rushed out of him, leaving him almost tired as he looked at Mistyeyes desperately. The gray dragon opened her mouth to say something, but Toothless spoke up again, cutting her off before she could even say anything. "I can't believe that I let this happen! Hiccup is my best friend, and it's all my fault that he's gone! I should have been there for him, I should have been there to protect him! I owe him my lifeâ€|and now I justâ€|I just-" He broke off, looking behind him sorrowfully, as if expecting to suddenly catch sight of his friend. But there was still nothing.

"It's not your fault, Toothless." Mistyeyes promised, narrowing her eyes as she spoke. "I once made a very terrible mistake, with the way that I ordered you to attack Hiccup last time we saw each other in the tunnels where the Night Furies lived. I didn't understand what life could be like back then, and I can never repay Hiccup enough for the way that he opened my eyes to the way things really are. I'll help you find him, Toothless, I will. And this time, I'll make sure that Nightflight stays dead."

Toothless blinked, rousing out of his self-blame just enough to catch what she said. Starting, he turned to look at her oddly. "What do you mean?" He asked, looking at her like he had never seen her before in his life. The female's ears slicked down to her head, blue eyes suddenly weighted down with grief as she stared at him intently. "Mistyeyes, what?" He demanded, a little more hardness entering his voice by now.

She ducked her head, closing her eyes. "It was before everything happened, right after you left." She confessed, voice careful, like she was treading on pins and needles. Toothless blinked, straightening somewhat as he looked at her a little closer. "I was the first to find Nightflight, she was barely alive." She closed her eyes, as if she didn't want to meet Toothless's gaze. "I healed her, along with many of the other dragons. It took a long time, but we were so sure that we could help her pull through. And we did." She opened her eyes once more, sadness and guilt riddled through her gaze as she looked desperately at her friend. "Please, Toothless, I never knew what would happen in cause of my efforts. I feel so terrible. This is all my fault." Her voice broke at the last part, the dragon closing her mouth with a resigned look on her face, as if bracing herself for Toothless's fury.

For a moment, Toothless had no idea what to do, staring at Mistyeyes like she was a foreign object. A million things he could say rushed through his mind, but none seemed to be the right to say. Before he even knew what he was doing, he leaned forward, pressing his head flush against Mistyeyes's own. The dragon's wings faltered in their strides, shock rippling through her as her eyes widened. It might have only lasted a heartbeat, or more like four years, but Toothless eventually pulled back, determination settling in his green orbs. "It doesn't matter."

"B-But" Mistyeyes floundered for words, still stunned at her easy let-off. She hadn't pictured it would go this way. Even now, with Hiccup getting farther and farther away from them, Toothless hadn't started yelling at her for her fatal mistake. "You aren't mad?" She managed, searching Toothless with a sense of urgency. "I mean, I made a mistake that caused all of this, if I had just left her there but I couldn't, I mean-"

"Are you going to stand by me from now on?" Toothless asked, voice dropping into a serious tone. His eyes were raw with grief, and sharp with impatience. But there was also a burning in the back of them, a question that was going unasked, hidden in the depths of his words. Mistyeyes knew the importance of the question, a small smile threatening on the edges of her mouth. Dipping her head close to her chest, she nodded once.

"Of course." She said softly, barely hearing herself. "That's what

I've wanted to do ever since I first saw you at Berk."

"Then you'll help me find Hiccup. You'll understand that I can't just leave him there." Toothless said. When Mistyeyes didn't say anything, blue eyes wide with disbelief. Her mouth remained open for a moment, she looked as if she wanted to continue yelling at Toothless, so the Night Fury interrupted. "I'm not going to give up on Hiccup, I don't care if the whole village burns down in the process. I HAVE to protect Hiccup. I don't care what else happens."

Her mouth closed gently, and after a beat of silence, determination set in her eyes as well. "Okay." She said, nodding once more. "You go out and look for Hiccup, I'll go back and protect the village while you're gone." When Toothless tried to object, she pressed on. "There are a million Night Furies down there, they're already outnumbered down there. They need at least one Night Fury down there, if I can try and even our chances, I will. You go ahead."

Toothless knew that just having one Night Fury against many others wouldn't exactly even the chances, but he didn't say anything. The fact that Mistyeyes understood the way that he needed to go was enough for him, he wouldn't say anything to wound her pride in herself, she would be fine. And he was running out of time if he wanted to catch up to Nightflight before anything else could happen. "Good luck, Mistyeyes." He said, already turning the way he needed to go. His wings were twitching, rearing to be off. The female only held his gaze, a kind of emotion that Toothless had only seen in Hiccup's expression whenever he used to look at him. It was love.

But before Toothless could ask, Mistyeyes turned and vanished.

Shaking his head to clear his thoughts away, Toothless whipped back around, green eyes narrowed into slits. "I'm coming Hiccup." He growled under his breath, claws sliding out from habit. Concentrating on the task at hand, pushing away the thought of the burning village down below, he fixed in his mind that Mistyeyes would have everything under control. Now all he could focus on was Hiccup. He had to catch up, no matter what it took. But he had no idea where Nightflight was heading, not to mention how fast she could go weighted down like she was. Toothless would just have to guess.\

So, blending into the night, Toothless shot off in the opposite direction, racing after Nightflight as fast as he could.

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"Are we almost there?"

"Shouldn't you know that?"

"Shouldn't you?"

"Don't copy me, this WAS your idea, you know!"

"Sorry, I just figured you might actually know where you're going."

"I DO. Lay off."

"We've been flying for hours!" Shadowclaw complained, shooting Leafdapple an angered look. "You said it wasn't that far from here!" Shocked as he might be to admit it, he didn't remember the way to his old home. He didn't even remember what it looked like. If he closed his eyes, he could almost see thick cave walls, but that was it. That was all he could muster up to remember about it. But with the way he lived in Berk, he kind of didn't want to know where he used to live. He only came back for an effort like this, for something that could turn the tables on Nightflight and possibly save Berk. If this plan worked, it would be a sure-fire way in saving his friends back home.

"Do you have patience, or what?" Leafdapple asked, rolling her eyes as she did so. "You're getting annoying."

"Let's just say that this is really important to me." Shadowclaw said, eyes narrowing.

Leafdapple glanced over at him, blinking as she did so. "You're not with us, are you?" She asked suddenly, catching Shadowclaw off guard. The bigger dragons started, wings faltering for a moment before he recovered himself. The female looked forward once more, ignoring his spasm. She went on, not bothering to wait for his reply. "I can see that you weren't. Everybody else was clambering, trying to be on the Raid. But when I asked you if you were going, you seemed way too upset by the notion of it." She looked back over at him, this time inviting him to say something.

"No." He said finally, not meeting her eyes as he spoke. "I'm not with them, and I'm not with you. I'm with Berk, that's the village that you all are attacking. My friends are on there, I came here to try and find out what was going on, I knew that Nightflight would let me come back, but nobody else. After all, I'm just a stupid youngling, I wasn't thinking when I went to Berk, isn't that right?" He asked, bitterness in his voice. Leafdapple was quiet, not interrupting him as she studied his face. "Everybody thinks that just because I'm young, I can't do anything. I can't be important. I came back here to show them different. Age is a number, I can be as smart as I want, right?"

"Sure." Leafdapple said, voice way too casual, it seemed. "After all, I don't think you're a stupid youngling."

"You don't?"

"Nah. I don't judge people like that." She sniffed, eyes narrowing somewhat at a large mass of island looming up ahead. "And I know what you're talking about, with the way that you aren't with Nightflight. I guess you could say that I'm not either. My parents brought me here with them, so I didn't have much of a choice in what I would do. You have to admit that Nightflight is right, with the way that the humans stormed our cave and killed many dragons. It's barbaric." Her eyes darkened. "They killed one of my friends. I didn't see them do it, and I barely knew it, really. My mother tried to hide it from me, but I found out sooner rather than later."

"I'm sorry." Shadowclaw managed, blinking.

"Yeah, I am too." Leafdapple said, voice much more curt than it was

before. "But I don't think we should go and kill the humans, it doesn't add up. Nightflight talks about the way humans are terrible and monsters. Butâ€¦if we kill themâ€¦we're no better than them. Right?" She prompted, turning and looking at Shadowclaw with a questioning look. The dragon tilted his head in response, suddenly realizing what was different about Leafdapple compared to the others.

"Have you ever talked one-on-one with Nightflight?" He asked suddenly, surprising Leafdapple.

"Well, not really." The female said, turning and studying the island that was getting closer and closer. "I like to blend in with the crowd, and it's not like you can walk right up to Nightflight and start a conversation. She's just not somebody that likes to talk, I guess you could say. The most I've heard her talk is when she's talking to everyone as a group, and I really don't pay attention usually. You know, her speeches get a little repetitive." A hint of amusement crept into her voice as she added the last part, but Shadowclaw barely noticed it.

That explained why Leafdapple wasn't a walking zombie like everybody else. It explained why she actually thought sense, instead of just following Nightflight blindly. Shadowclaw had learned long ago about Toothless and the way that Nightflight controlled the way he thought, which explained why everybody on the island just followed Nightflight around like they had no mind of their own. This might be the only other dragon with thought on the island besides himself, Shadowclaw realized. And suddenly, he found himself feeling a large rush of gratitude to Leafdapple.

"Here is where we land. Then we'll be in the center of the island, close to the cave where everybody else lives." Leafdapple instructed, already swooping down to the ground. Shadowclaw followed her, guessing that she didn't really want to talk anymore. Landing neatly on the overgrown grass of the island, Shadowclaw turned, memories rushing back to him as he looked up at the large mountain-like structure that lay right in front of them. Leafdapple turned, heading for a small crevice in the rock that Shadowclaw remembered opened up into a wide tunnel, the entrance.

Taking off without glancing back at him, Leafdapple squeezed herself through the small space, disappearing in less than a moment. Shadowclaw followed, but hesitated in front of the crack, eyeing it wearily. If grown dragons could fit through it, why couldn't he? "You coming?" Leafdapple shouted back at him, voice echoing against the walls of the cave. Shaking himself, Shadowclaw pushed his way forward, cursing himself for being such a scaredy-dragon. Pushing his way forward, Shadowclaw crammed himself into the cave, shuffling through until the space widened enough for him to walk normally.

Waiting until his eyes grew used to the dark, he looked over at Leafdapple, whose eyes gleamed like a deer's in the darkness. "Where to now?" He said, flinching as his voice boomed through the large network of caverns. Leafdapple winced as well, they both seemed to have forgotten what it had been like in the cave, Shadowclaw a little bit more than Leafdapple. "Do you know where everybody is?" He whispered, lowering his voice to a small whisper, which echoed softly through the space. Leafdapple looked over her shoulder, turning and

starting up the small walkway, a hill, it felt like. Stumbling after her, Shadowclaw quickened his pace until he was shoulder-to-shoulder with her.

After a few minutes of uncomfortable silence, Shadowclaw spoke up, eyes flashing over to look at her from the corner of his eyes. "You know, that's not what you should think about humans. That they're always attacking dragons." He said. "I bet Nightflight doesn't tell you that Berk lives in harmony with dragons. No attacks, no nothing. And the boy that she's after? He's one of my best friends, all of the dragons love him."

"I find that a little hard to believe." Leafdapple said, more confused than angry.

Shadowclaw shook his head, finding that his vision was starting to clear. He could see the walls of the cave, the drops of water leaking from the roof falling to the ground. The moist, slick floor was familiar to him, as was the slimy wall of the cavern that brushed against him. "Tell you what." He said, staring all around him and taking it all in. "When we get everybody to come with us and fight against Nightflight, I can show you everything in that island. You'll love it."

Leafdapple stopped still, blinking rapidly. Shadowclaw turned around, sitting on the slick ground and tilting his head to the side. "That's what you're trying to do?" She demanded, sounding mystified. "You're trying to get someâ€|Rebel Alliance?" At Shadowclaw's 'duh' stare, she let out a bluster, shuffling her paws on the ground. "And you didn't think that information would be important to me at all? I thought you just wanted to stay here!"

"No!" Shadowclaw yelled back, looking stunned and a little bit amused at the same time. But the stunned outweighed the amusement of it. "I thought youâ€|" He trailed off, blinking a moment before he shook his head roughly, revising what he meant to say. "No, all I'm saying is that wouldn't it be a lot better for everybody if we just got rid of Nightflight? I'm going to rally together as many Night Furies as I can and lead them back to Berk to help the island! Don't you see? If we-

"We're younglings! We're not supposed to do things like this!" She fumbled, spinning around in a tight, agitated circle.

"That doesn't mean we can't make a difference!" Shadowclaw snapped. "You said yourself you thought I was smart! And you have to admit, this plan IS smart! If we find the problem and strike it in the center, the whole thing will go away! The Night Furies would leave Berk alone if Nightflight got defeated, they might even stay at Berk like all the other dragons! Wouldn't that be great!" He searched her eyes, and knew that she privately knew that he was right. "The sooner we do this, the better! Don't you understand?"

Leafdapple hesitated a moment, before she dipped her head slightly in a nod. She opened her mouth to say something, when a voice spoke from behind Shadowclaw, making the youngling leap into the air with surprise, spinning around with claws extended. A large Night Fury stood behind the smaller one, looming over him like a tower. His eyes were slightly narrowed, and from behind him, more and more Night Furies melted out of the shadows. "You speak much sense for one so

young." The large dragon rumbled, Shadowclaw straightening somewhat as he blinked with surprise.

Looking from one dragon to another, the large Night Fury bowed his head to the youngling, almost like he respected him. "My name is Talon. I heard what you've said just now—we all have. And if you'll go on, I'm sure all of us would like to listen. What you say is true, the way that Nightflight needs to be stopped. This group of dragons were the only ones to see sense. To see through her web of lies. And we would do anything to bring our family back together."

Leafdapple paced forward to stand beside Shadowclaw, turning and giving him a bemused look. Staring at her for a moment, Shadowclaw gave her a small smile, which she grew even more confused about. He kept forgetting that dragons off of Berk didn't know what a smile was. Clearing his throat, Shadowclaw pushed himself up to his feet, eyeing the crowd looking at him with a sense of fright. But he closed his eyes, clearing his muddled thoughts before he opened them once more, puffing out his chest in hopes of looking more sophisticated. "I came all the way from Berk, the island that Nightflight is attacking at this very moment." He started, still hung over on the idea that people were actually listening to him. "We need help, and I think that you'll find that it would be in both of our advantages—"

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A/N: Hope you like it!

I'm having a Star Wars marathon tomorrow! SO Excited! Who can catch my Star Wars reference in this chapter first? Hm? O-o

I was on my Band Trip for the last few days, it was tons of fun, but it was also why I haven't updated. I did it the first day I could, which is today! :D

No Hiccup, sorry bout that—. T^T

Does anybody else notice that the ending of MLP season one is almost EXACTLY the same to the ending of the fourth Star Wars movie? Search up MLP Star Wars and you'll see. It's almost scary o-o

23. Chapter 23

A/N: Sorry for the wait. Marching band ended a while ago, so hopefully I'll be able to get on the computer a lot more. I was also waiting for more reviews, I didn't get a lot last time : (

Just like I said, if I get a lot of reviews, I'll make more of an effort to get on~!

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The first time they went riding after everything that happened was the moment that Toothless was dreading ever since he first wondered about it. They couldn't go for a while, Hiccup was 'grounded' you could say, until his wounds healed fully. With the way that people watched him and the Night Fury zoom across the sky, it was no wonder

that rule was made. They did more jumps and dares than all the other Vikings on the island combined together. Add that to the amount of injuries they both had, and they would crash into a crag of rock before you could count to ten. Which most of the village could, save a few like Snotlout.

It wasn't like Toothless even wanted to go flying. For the first few weeks back at the island, Toothless moped. He moped in the house, he moped outside the house, he even made the effort to mope back at the cove. Just as long as he could be alone wherever he was, he would mope. He felt like he didn't deserve to be back, and when he had to watch Hiccup make his daily trip to the Elder's home, he was in an even worse state. No words could explain the guilt that weighed over his conscience, and it didn't seem like anything could help him shrug it off his shoulders.

And being alone gave him time to think. Not thinking about it was bad, he felt like he was forgetting the biggest mistake he'd ever made. Remembering it didn't help much either, but it wasn't like he was able to do anything else. Everybody seemed to forgive him except for the higher-up people in the Village. Stoick didn't even forgive him for what he did, the thought always made him cringe. It wasn't like he blamed the man, he had every right to be mad, but people like Astrid and Snotlout were forgiving the moment he returned to Hiccup. Though Astrid was a little more reluctant with her forgiveness. None of them were as quick to forgive as Hiccup was, though.

As soon as Hiccup saw Toothless, he seemed to snap right back to the way he had been before everything happened. Despite the scrapes and bruises lining his face, despite the limp that his good leg had acquired, he rushed forward in a run to wrap his arms around Toothless. So it was no wonder that the first day he was granted the option, he made a point to go around the whole village to find Toothless and announce that they were going flying. Toothless was laying down, having melted a large circle in the snow so he could lay down, after the water evaporated, of course. His eyes were closed, he was just about to fall asleep, when Hiccup fumbled down into the cove.

"Hey, Bud!" The teen let out the familiar greeting, making his way over to where Toothless was curled up. The Night Fury stiffened at the sound of his voice, just like he always did even before whole mess started. Hiccup was always something to worry over, after all. He raised his head, watching with careful eyes as the human made his way around the shallow pond, which had been frozen over by now. The ice always made Hiccup's fake leg ever harder to maneuver, but that seemed to be the least of the boy's worries. In what seemed like no time at all, he came to a stop in front of the dragon, face flushed with excitement. "We can go riding now, isn't that great!? I've missed riding with you!"

Toothless's ears perked, slowly pushing himself up to his feet. He tilted his head to the side, unsure of what to do. He remembered the last time they flew together, and he had to fight back a grimace. Hiccup blinked rapidly, seeming to know what he was thinking as his smile faded. He narrowed his eyes slightly, opening his mouth. He looked like he wanted to lecture, and Toothless braced himself for the oncoming spiel about how Toothless shouldn't blame himself for this. He'd gotten the speech at least four times already. Twice in one night, that was a record that looked like it would be broken

soon. But then Hiccup snapped his mouth shut, closing his eyes momentarily before shaking his head slightly.

"C'mon, let's go!" He said, pushing aside whatever he was about to say. Toothless blinked, hesitating a moment before shaking himself mentally. He was being ridiculous. Picking himself up off from the ground, the Night Fury flattened himself down close, waiting for Hiccup to climb onto his back. The icy snow burned his stomach where he pushed it against the ground, but he tried to ignore it as best he could, the cold usually didn't bother him that much, he could stand it.

Hiccup reached up as high as he could, wrapping his hands tightly around the saddle that was strapped tightly onto the dragon's back. Hoisting himself up, he situated himself for a moment, fumbling slightly in his movements. They hadn't done this in a long time, Toothless wasn't about to condemn the boy for being a little slow with the process. It wasn't until they were just about to take off did both of them remember a very crucial bit of information. Hiccup swung his leg forward, to where it was always supposed to lock into the device that controlled Toothless's tailfin. He still made that mistake today, too, Toothless realized. It had been so natural for the both of them.

"Wha-" Hiccup twisted around to look back at the tailfin, eyes widening for a moment in surprise at the black and gold device. Toothless looked up a little nervously, waiting for the boy's response with an anxious shuffle. Realization seemed to smack into the boy, and he straightened, face reddening somewhat. "Oh, right." He said, reaching up and scratching the back of his head awkwardly. "I almost forgot that you had that new tail, bud." He mumbled, obviously a little put-out. Toothless remembered the last time he had that tail, remembering the way he had assured Hiccup that we wouldn't go anywhere without him by smashing it. But he refused to do the same thing to this one.

Without waiting for Hiccup like he normally would have, Toothless shot into the air.

Toothless pushed himself harder and harder, wings pumping a mile a minute as he shot after Nightflight in a vain attempt to catch up to her. "HICCUP!" He yowled, trying to see through the smoke that clotted the air around him. But even he couldn't see, the burning village behind him was giving off enough smoke to blind the entire world. It was just black, and nothing more. No Hiccup, and no Nightflight. Skidding to a stop in midair, Toothless did a full circle, eyes madly flashing back and forth for a sight of his human. His breaths came in rapid gasps, and he couldn't control it. Feeling frustration build up inside him, he flung his head back, shooting a beam of white-hot fire up into the sky. He waited a moment, watching it spiral upwards anxiously.

It exploded somewhere high above him, purple sparks raining down to shower him in small pinpricks of flame. Still, nothing happened, nothing helped the smoke around him. If anything, it made it all worse. Lowering his head close to his chest, Toothless let out a low growl, frustration tearing at his throat like claws. "Hiccup, I'm so sorry." He grumbled, squeezing his eyes shut tightly, as if to block out whatever was happening around him. He cracked them open slightly, only to see the small gleam of his tailfin strapped onto the end of

his tail.

The only reason he kept this tailfin was for a situation exactly like the one right now. If Hiccup was in danger, Toothless would be grounded, unable to shoot after and rescue him like a dragon is supposed to do. But it seemed that even with the stupid thing on his tail, he still couldn't save Hiccup, no matter how hard he tried. The thought made his heart jerk, and Toothless knew that he had to keep going. Even if he would be on a wild goose chase, he couldn't give up this easily. He was Hiccup's dragon. Without Hiccup, there just wouldn't be any point in anything.

Hiccup might not know it. They might have been on bad terms before—but Toothless would never be able to live without Hiccup. And he had to make sure that he caught up to Hiccup to make sure the boy knew it. So that he would know that no matter what happened, Toothless would be right by his side, just like it always had been before everything spiraled out of control. Toothless might not have been able to stop Nightflight and her Night Furies all at once, but he could stop this.

Determination settling in his green orbs, Toothless spun around quickly, pausing a moment to cast a glance back at the island, smaller now that he had flown so far away from it. "Be safe, Mistyeyes." He murmured, suddenly unsure on how she and the rest of the village would be able to hold off everything until he got back. But he shook himself, he was only one dragon, he wouldn't make a difference. And Hiccup needed him, if he had to sacrifice a million humans for Hiccup's sake, he would do it without a passing glance. Gathering himself for one more moment, he started flying forward once more, dashing the way he thought that Nightflight had gone, leaving the island and Mistyeyes behind.

And he didn't look back.

It's funny how when you're totally freaking out and flailing around and yelling, how everything can go so much slower. And it was like you were watching from outside your body. So in short, you were watching yourself flipping out in slow motion. Usually you wonder what's going on, but all Hiccup could think of was: "Why am I such an idiot?" He had gone into the forest by himself during a dragon attack, something he should have learned NOT to do when he was like five. From experience, mind you. And yet here he was, in this huge situation that he could barely comprehend. He was in such a panic, he couldn't even stop long enough to feel pain that was probably just waiting to slam into him any minute, the claws buried deep into his skin that were probably going to rip him to shreds in point five seconds.

Ludi was either in shock or too frightened to move. Either way, she was clinging to Hiccup, the only thing she could seem to do right now. She was locked, stiff, not looking as she buried her head into her owner, frightened out of her fur. Hiccup fought to keep hold of her, though, Nightflight was staggering through the air, unable to see out of her ruined eyes from what Ludi had done to them. The was twirling and bouncing through the air, making it all the more worse considering how fast she was going. Hiccup hadn't met more than two Night Furies, at least personally. So he didn't know what their average wing power was, but Nightflight was MUCH faster than Toothless. Hiccup lost sight of the village a long time

ago.

Floundering through the air, Nightflight was losing height, Hiccup could tell that pretty soon, they were going to smack right into the ocean. And with his now-bad arm and Ludi clinging to him, he wouldn't make it back to the island. Not by a long shot. The thought of his body being found by passing ships made his heart threaten to stop beating. The thought of him being returned to his father made his breath skip away from him. He closed his eyes tightly, grinding his teeth together as words rained down on him. What the Villagers would say about it. "Figures." "We should have locked him inside like we always did." "The screw-up screwed up again." "I guess he didn't change after all."

"The screw-up screwed up again."

Hiccup's eyes snapped open, fire burning in the depths of their green hue. He looked down, spotting an island that was coming closer. Nightflight was slowly spinning out of control, the island was just a haze of green that was spinning underneath them. Turning painfully, Hiccup gasped sharply as he felt his skin start to tear. He would fall in a matter of moments. The sea was getting closer. The island wasn't close enough, he wasn't going to land where he wanted. He had to do it anyway. Looking down at Ludi, Hiccup swallowed the lump in his throat, eyes burning already as bit by bit, the pain started to leak into his system. "I'm sorry." He said, the cat perking at the sound of his voice.

She looked up, obviously confused, but she didn't have any time before she let out a loud yowl of shock. Hiccup reached up to the claws that were slowly coming loose from his skin. Closing his eyes tightly and clamping his teeth together, Hiccup pushed upwards as fast and as hard as he could. He tore himself off of Nightflight, the sudden weight change making the dragon falter a moment, tumbling forward and smashing into the sea with a slam. Hiccup shot down to the water, blood already gushing freely from the wound on his shoulder. He screamed right before he hit the water, Ludi struggling, trying to get out of his grip. Going under the water, Hiccup jerked, back arching as the shock of the cold water jolted up his spine.

The water around him immediately dyed a dark red color, Hiccup couldn't even move his arm without pain shooting up the mangled limb. Which way was up!? Which was down!? Flailing for a moment, Hiccup felt Ludi start to struggle once more, running out of air just like the boy was. Finding use in his good leg, he kicked upwards, seeming to repeat the kick for hours before he finally burst out of the water, gasping for air. Ludi floundered in the water, smacking the surface with her paws and spraying water up in all directions.

Gasping, Hiccup looked over quickly to a loud splashing sound, legs churning in the water as he saw Nightflight. The dragon looked like she didn't even know which way to go, she didn't even look like she knew where she was, much less what was going on. She yowled and roared with anger, which was muffled by the water she was swallowing in her attempts to stay afloat. She was causing so much water to spray upwards, Hiccup was even getting splashed with it, even though he was a ways away from her. This was the first time he actually got a look at her eyes, and he had to swallow back the lump in his throat when he did.

They were swollen, blood still seeping out of the wounds and tingeing the water a light pink. It looked to painful to even look at, and Hiccup had to look away. She couldn't even open them anymore, that much was for certain. Otherwise, she wouldn't have had such an erratic flight. Whether or not it was permanent, that was to be decided later. Or Hiccup would never have the chance to find out, which was what he would have rather taken. Looking down at Ludi, who was wrapping herself tightly around Hiccup, shivering and shaking with wide eyes. She looked pathetic, but Hiccup was sure that he looked the same, if not even worse, considering how much his shoulder hurt.

Feeling slightly dizzy, Hiccup swallowed back the sick feeling that was rising in the back of his throat, heaving for air that stung his throat. Holding on tightly to Ludi, Hiccup started to kick forward, fumbling in the water as he made for the island. It wasn't far away, but it was a long swim to somebody with a wounded shoulder that couldn't move and a cat in tow. You factor in the dragon that they were trying to get away from, and this seemed like a lost cause. But Nightflight hadn't noticed them yet, and hopefully it would stay like that. Ludi buried her head into Hiccup's good shoulder, her fur in wet spikes that stuck out in all directions. Ludi hated getting wet, that much was certain. But there wasn't much good Hiccup could do for her right now.

"I have to get to the island. I have to keep Ludi safe." Hiccup thought, repeating the words as he paddled for the shore determinately. That was twice that Ludi risked her own life to save his, something that Hiccup would have never thought possible. If he didn't do the same and try to keep her alive just as much as himself, he would never be able to look at himself again. When he first got Ludi, he thought she was a ball of fluff that would lay around the house and do absolutely nothing, just like Ruffnut's cat had done so long ago. The same one that ended up mauling her face. But Ludi turned out to be so much different, and Hiccup wasn't about to let her die.

After what seemed like a decade or two, Hiccup finally reached land, crawling out of the water and collapsing on the pebbly shore. Collapsing, Hiccup gasped for breath, unable to get enough into his lungs, it seemed. He rasped and wheezed, until he could finally get his head to stop spinning. Propping himself up slowly, Hiccup looked over to where Ludi was, the cat curled up in a small, shivering ball. She was trying to lick herself clean rapidly, but she seemed to be losing the battle, finally just giving up and going slack against the ground. He reached over to pick her up, when he flinched from the sudden pain of moving his shoulder. The wound was numbed from the cold of the water, but the pain was returning once more.

Forcing himself to turn and look at it, Hiccup grimaced, immediately looking away. He couldn't even see the wound, there was too much gore in the way of it. Reaching up, he moved his shirt so that cloth was wrapped tightly around it, biting down on his good arm as he did so to keep from screaming. But pretty soon, he had made sure the cloth would stay tightly around it. Hopefully that would keep the wound okay for now until he could sort something out. But right now, they had to get deeper into the island. Reaching over, he picked Ludi up with his good arm, grimacing and growling under his breath as he pushed himself up to his shaky feet.

He was about to turn to dive into the woods that concealed the center of the island, when he froze, closing his eyes slowly. He turned, a little hesitantly, and stood there for a moment, watching as Nightflight struggled in the water. She was growing weaker, sinking deeper and deeper underwater when she stopped paddling. She gasped and choked, trying to call out but always swallowing back water when she tried. Before he could stop himself, Hiccup put Ludi down in a rush, running out to the edge of the water and cupping his hand over his mouth. "This way!" He called, immediately cursing himself mentally over and over. Nightflight stilled slightly at this, as if unsure of what to do. "It's this way! There's land over here! Follow the sound of my voice!"

Nightflight turned, looking straight at him, as if she could see him. Slowly, she started to paddle over to him, like a confused dog would do when not sure about something. Hiccup started to back away slowly, nodding to himself, as if satisfied. "That's good, keep coming this way!" He said, turning around and picking Ludi back up again. If he could understand HER, she would probably be ranting at him right now. The small cat was looking at him like he was an idiot. Like he had just done something that would melt the entire world on purpose.

But before she could do anything, Hiccup dove into the cover of the trees, forcing his tired legs into motion as he rushed through the foliage.

He had to find a way off of here before he could get them into even more trouble.

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A/N: Sorry if the chapter is kinda short, but I really liked this one for some reason.

One of my readers is creating fan art for my story on DA, and I'm soooo excited for it! :D I've always wanted fanart for one of my fanfictions, I just could never get any! But if you wanna check that out, I'll keep you posted! ;D So excitedâ€¦!

Anyway, I hope you liked, and I hope that you'll review! :P

24. Chapter 24

A/N: Thanks for all the reviews! I'll make sure to keep you posted on the picture!

It's PurpleMistPepper who's making the picture, so everybody give a special thanks to her! :D

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The clearing was thick with humans and dragons both, so packed that you couldn't stumble five steps before crashing into another person. The smoke was stinging her eyes, and as Astrid ducked yet another attempted blow from a dragon, the girl was wheezing for air that didn't seem to fill her lungs. The Night Fury was growing impatient, eyes burning with absolute hate and anger as it loomed over her. Narrowed her eyes stubbornly, Astrid tightened her hold on the axe,

springing up to her feet and off the burning ground once more. Her legs wobbled slightly underneath her, but she drew her hand back anyway, swinging it forward and catching the dragon's cheek on the sharp blade.

The dragon howled, grimacing away from the strike before he recovered a millisecond afterwards, straightening up and gathering a deep breath in. Astrid's breath caught as she recognized the move from Toothless, and she immediately drew her axe up in an attempt for a shield, knowing she had absolutely no time to run. If she turned her back on the dragon now, the result would be much worse. Hiccup's voice rang in her head, and the blare of a purple light shot at her. "And a Night Fury NEVER misses." The words barely had time to ring in her mind before the shot rammed right into the face of her shield, knocking her over to slam into the ground.

The girl spat out a mouthful of grass, gagging on the sharp taste that burned her mouth at once. She started to get up, but she could feel the way her limbs dragged sluggishly, the way they started to shake and tremble underneath her own weight. She couldn't take much more of this, and the same could probably go for all of the other Vikings around her. Surveying the battle scene, Astrid realized with a twist of her heart that they were fighting a losing battle. She could see some recognizable figures, like Snotlout and Stoick, who were doing their best in parrying off blows from the dragons. But with a sickening drop in her stomach, Astrid realized that there were unmoving shapes lying on the ground. Were people dying?

Her eyes widened slowly, her stomach dropping all the way to the ground and staying there. The ground swayed underneath her, and she felt like she was going to vomit. Hiccup. Where was Hiccup? Last time she had seen him—he was no match for any kind of dragon here. The sudden thrill of panic gave her strength, and she jolted to her feet at once. She glanced over her shoulder, where the Night Fury had been moments before. It had gone. It must have presumed Astrid dead. The girl narrowed her blue eyes before turning and racing through the crowd.

Hiccup was fine, he had Toothless with him. There was no way that he was a goner, Toothless wouldn't let anything ever happen to him! The thoughts didn't seem to cut it for Astrid though, as she quickened her pace to an all-out sprint, hair whipping back flat against her head. SHE would make sure nothing happened to him. The last time they had seen each other, she had let him run off even when she felt something was wrong with him. They might not have been on the best terms, but—if anything happened, she was going to hold herself personally responsible.

She weaved through the crowd, desperately searching for a glimpse of the boy's face or even Toothless, but she came up empty. She was running so fast, she felt like she was flying. She barely had time to place her foot on the ground before it was back up again, she had never run this fast before. Smoke burned her throat and set it on fire, and yet she kept pushing herself. Her axe was clutched in her hand as she ran and she struck it out at random times, slicing a Night Fury as she went in a small hope of helping the others in her village. She was always too far gone for the Night Fury she injured to look back in sight of their attacker.

She was almost all the way to the other end of the village, when

suddenly a large Night Fury swooped forward, planting itself between her and the rest of the square. She gasped sharply, burning her throat once more as she did so. Staggering backwards, she came to a clumsy halt, stopping just inches away from the dragon, nearly tripping over herself. Her eyes were wide with surprise, she wasn't easily caught off-guard. But she supposed that her getting this far without being interrupted was a miracle in its own way. But the longer she stayed still, the farther away Hiccup could be getting from her. Tightening her hold on her axe, Astrid started to charge forward, letting out a harsh yell of battle as she raced forward. The Night Fury drew itself up, showing its teeth. Blood was leaking from its shoulder, it was already wounded. Astrid doubted it would be as tired as she was getting, but she knew that with the injury, she had a better chance of fending it off.

Her axe collided with the dragon's skin, and she felt it stick immediately. The Night Fury howled at once, staggering and roaring in pain at the crucial blow. Astrid was panting by now, legs shaking underneath her. She could barely hold herself up without staggering. The smoke was pressing on her now, threatening to shove her to the ground like she was a mere twig on the ground and not the brave Viking she really was. It wasn't fair. Throwing herself forward, the girl wrapped her hands tightly around the handle of the axe, bracing herself a moment before tugging it back to her as hard as she could imagine.

The rest went by in a flash. She was stumbling backwards, the force of the movement having knocked off her balance. The Night Fury whipped around, anger shining in every inch of the beast's eyes as it looked at her intently. She barely had time to blink before the creature pushed itself off the ground, ramming into her head-on, claws-extended. They rolled with the impact, before the dragon managed to pin her down, a feral growl ripping from its throat. Astrid gasped sharply at the pain, blue eyes widening while tears stung her eyes even worse than the smoke. She screamed in pain, closing her eyes tightly as she tried to shove the pain away from herself, but it was too great, it burned under her skin, feeling like a million needles were being pricked against her at one time.

She didn't know how long it lasted, seconds, maybe minutes, but she was screaming the entire time. She couldn't stop. She grabbed for her axe, but it had skidded away from her, she had no idea where it was. In the light of the new situation, Astrid felt a lump grow in her throat. That was it then, she realized. She was one of the best fighters in the village, or at least in the top twenty. If she couldn't fend for herself, they were really in more trouble than she thought they were. They stood no chance, it was that way from the beginning. And she was just realizing it now.

She closed her eyes in defeat, and waited.

But all of a sudden, a roar reached her ears, louder than everything else on the island. The weight that was crushing her against the hot ground vanished, and she snapped her eyes open, sitting bolt upright. Fright was evident in her eyes, and usually that was an emotion that was never there with her. But her eyes landed on what was happening in front of her. The Night Fury that had attacked her before was under the claws of another, a familiar smoky-gray shade of a dragon. The dragon grabbed a moment with the other Night Fury, but it was evident that she was winning the battle before it even started. After

a short moment, she swung around, flinging the Night Fury back into the crowd with a warning howl. The dragon hesitated moment, turning and looking back at the gray Night Fury, some other kind of emotion flashing through its eyes. But it whipped around, charging back into the fray without another passing glance.

The gray Night Fury watched him go for a moment, making sure he wouldn't turn and come back. Then she turned, blue eyes locking worriedly with Astrid's own. She started forward slowly, unsure, as if she didn't want to frighten Astrid. But she knew who this one was, she knew it the moment she came to the rescue. "Mistyeeyes!" She breathed out, relief in every syllable of the word. The dragon stopped in front of her, looking down slowly, assessing the girl as she came to a stop. Astrid started, suddenly feeling a burning starting to spread. Now that she wasn't in shock, she looked down, closing her eyes immediately. "I'm fine, Mistyeeyes, I really am." The dragon tilted her head to the side, still looking troubled.

Suddenly, a thought crashed into her, Astrid's heart hammering against her throat. "Where's Stormfly?" She choked out, unable to bear the thought of losing her dragon. Mistyeeyes blinked for a moment, as if processing the question. Then she smiled, shaking her head slightly as she went and nuzzled the girl comfortingly. But Astrid still wasn't settled. Her eyes took a new form of intensity, and she managed to push herself up to a standing position, despite her many worsening injuries. She placed one hand on the dragon's shoulder, as if to prop herself up. And she looked right into her eyes. Usually Mistyeeyes had the same look in the blue orbs as Ludi did most of the time. A kind of aloofness, a sense of contentment and happiness that originated from some odd reason. "Hiccup?" She asked, the word coming out in a wheeze.

This time, Mistyeeyes hesitated. The indecision was clear in the dragon, the way she shuffled her paws, the flash of absolute sadness going through her eyes. Astrid slowly took back her hand, slapping it down to her side as she narrowed her eyes. "You're wrong." She snapped, starting to feel dizzy as she wobbled where she stood. Mistyeeyes stiffened, alarm lighting her eyes as she made a move to go and help Astrid stand. But the girl pushed away her help, turning and starting back into the throng of the fighting. "You're wrong!" She yelled behind her, voice cracking slightly. She didn't even know whether or not Mistyeeyes was following, but she kept talking. "Hiccup is FINE, I saw him just a few minutes ago, right!? He's just—he's just waiting for me at the other side of the island!" She staggered, losing her footing as she felt the ground shift underneath her.

She spun in a full circle, confused suddenly. Which way was she going in the first place? She couldn't remember suddenly. She held the side of her head, wincing slightly as she felt the beginnings of a small headache that was spreading. A large shape was barreling towards her through the crowd, looking like it was charging straight for her. "Hiccup?" Astrid mumbled, blinking away the black spots from her vision. Her eyes slowly widened once more as she realized what it was, but before she could try and run, something rammed into her side, scooping her up and barreling up into the night sky.

Astrid shrieked, grabbing on tightly to Mistyeeyes as the wind threatened to knock her right off of her perch. "Let me down!" She yelled, watching as the burning village slowly rounded away from

them. Mistyeyes was shooting into the forest, blue eyes narrowed into determined slits as she veered off, straight into the trees. Astrid ducked her head, mumbling in protests as the branches slapped at her face and black. They flew for a while, and Astrid had no idea where to, but suddenly, Mistyeyes let out a loud yip-like call, swooping down and digging her claws into the earth to stop herself. Astrid nearly fell right off of Mistyeyes from the force of the stop, but Mistyeyes quickly thrust out her wing, steadying the girl before kneeling down close to the grass.

Astrid didn't move, letting her eyes close softly. She could just stay here. The smoke was only just reaching this place, they had flown far enough away. The air was slightly fresher, and it did her good to suck in the non-polluted wind for the first time in what seemed too long. She felt even more light-headed now that she could actually manage to take a breath. Mistyeyes let out another sharp yap, and eventually footsteps could be heard coming closer. But she was too dead to the world to try and look up at what was happening. But her hold tightened considerably on Mistyeyes's flank, something that the gray dragon noticed with a hint of concern.

"Mistyeyes?" The dragon perked at her name, watching as Stormfly shouldered her way out of the line of trees. "What's wrong? I thought you were-" She broke off, eyes growing large as she caught sight of her rider slung over the Night Fury's back. "What happened!?" The dragon roared, looking much more panicked than she had been a moment ago. Mistyeyes looked from Stormfly back to Astrid, looking unsure. She felt a nervous tingling in her scales, and she knew that she couldn't stay here much longer.

"Look, Astrid got attacked, she'll be fine. You have the Elder with you, right?" She asked, looking over Stormfly's shoulder anxiously. The Nadder nodded dumbly, looking a little confused by now. "Great." Mistyeyes said curtly, trotting over briskly and shrugging Astrid over so that she was on her own dragon. "Look, I'm gonna go back to the village, we really aren't doing well right now." She glanced over her shoulder, a frown pulling the edges of her lips down. "Toothless left a while ago, and he still hasn't come backâ€¦I'm worried about him, if something happened." She looked back at Stormfly, as if wanting some sort of assurance from the Nadder, but she didn't say anything, only ducking her head.

"I'll see if I can help by bringing more injured people to the Elder." Mistyeyes said finally, turning and heading back the way she came. Her ears were flat to her head, and she paused a moment before looking back. "Make sure that Astrid is safe, okay? Don't let her come back to the island." She turned, closing her eyes and shaking her head side to side. "We're done. Just pleaseâ€¦start getting the people with you off the island. We'll follow you there."

"What!?" Stormfly blustered, staggering slightly. "B-But, how will we find each other? Where do we go? You can't just give up like this! The Vikings will never abandon the fight, they're much too stubborn!"

"People know when to quit!" Mistyeyes roared, voice trembling with emotion as she cut her friend off. The two faced off for a moment, eyes locked in a glare that could have burned through wood if placed in the middle. Stormfly opened her mouth, as if she wanted to say something in response. But she shook her head, turning rapidly and

pacing away into the trees, anger coming off of her in waves. Mistyeyes stared after her grimly, but did not stop her. She had no idea if Stormfly would actually follow her orders and evacuate, why would she? Mistyeyes was not leader here, that much was true. Shaking herself, Mistyeyes turned, heading back into the sky without another glance.

At least she knew that Stormfly would never break her promise with Astrid. Through thick and thin, Stormfly would take care of her rider, that was the whole thing about Berk that made it special, made all of the other Night Furies hate it. There was a sense of love on the island, and loyalty. Up in the air, Mistyeyes took the moment to close her eyes as tight as she could, letting out as sharp breath that she hadn't realized she'd been holding. She joined Berk for a specific reason. To be apart of that love.

And it turns out she would never be able to fully experience it like she'd wanted to.

-LINE-LINE-LINE-LINE-LINE-LINE-THIS-BETTER-SHOW-UP-OR-I'LL-BE-MAD

It was the safest place to be. And the hardest to get up to. Hiccup looked all the way up, head nearly touching his back. Ludi was already up the tree, having recovered from the unwanted joyride/swim. The small cat proved a good climber, having already made up half of the tree by now. But it might have something to do with the way they were being hunted down by a large, raging Night Fury. Sighing, Hiccup looked over his shoulder at the forest, which was still empty as before. Nothing even moved, which was the thing that unnerved him.

"Heyâ€¦I was thinkingâ€¦" He said, looking back up at Ludi, who peered down at him with her owl-looking eyes that gleamed in the darkness. "we could find a hiding spotâ€¦that you knowâ€¦isn't impossible for me to get up to." He said, ending on a flat note. Between his shoulder and his bad leg, there was little to no chance of him managing the climb to the branch where Ludi was. The cat huffed angrily, straightened up and hopping down a few branches, stopping a few feet off of the ground and looking at him expectantly. Hiccup grumbled underneath his breath, itching with irritation as he stretched up, gripping the tree branch closest to him with reluctance. "I make exceptions for you, you stupid cat." Hiccup grumbled, sure that Ludi wouldn't hear. But the cat sniffed, turning and hopping back up the tree a ways, stopping and looking at him smugly.

The movements cause his shoulder to throb strongly, and he had to grit his teeth to concentrate the task at hand and not at the pain. He managed a few branches, panting by the time he was a mere two feet off the ground. "I can't do this." He mumbled, closing his eyes and using his good arm to press down on his shoulder wound, which made it worse. "I'm sorry, Ludi." He shot up to the cat, a nervous rustle in the branches sounding above him as a sort of reply. Silence came for a moment, but Ludi was the one to break it, and when she broke it, she BROKE it into a million pieces.

In little to no time at all, Ludi's voice rose into a shriek, screaming and yowling down at Hiccup like the whole place was on fire. It nearly caused Hiccup to fall off the of the stupid branch.

But as he tightened his hold, he realized what Ludi was fussing over. A rumbling noise was getting closer and closer, and a dark shape was hurtling forward, clumsy and falling over itself. Hiccup sucked it a sharp breath, turning and looking up desperately at Ludi, as if she could help him. But she seemed to be stuck where she was, jerking down to where Hiccup was, but not moving, as if she were glued to the branch. Her eyes were wild, and her tail flicked rapidly back and forth. There was nothing she could do except call out to him. Grinding his teeth together so hard, he thought they would fall out, Hiccup jumped off his branch, grabbing the next one clumsily and pulling himself up with a pained grimace.

His shoulder shrieked with pain, the wild movements making it start to open once more. His fake foot bent and dented on the wood where he banged it against, making his whole leg ring with a sharp ache. The climb was terrible, and by the time he made it up to Ludi, he collapsed on the wood, closing his eyes and breathing unevenly. Ludi poked and prodded him, making him sit up so that she could make sure he was alright. Only then did Hiccup pause, looking down into the clearing below, swallowing the lump in his throat as he did so.

Nightflight paced beneath their tree, smelling the air loudly, intent on the wind. She stayed like that for a moment before cursing under her breath, ducking her head and reaching up to rub her ruined eyes. "Where are you!" She called, and Hiccup flinched immediately. Not flinching from fright or surprise—but another kind of emotion. One that Vikings never felt, not ever. Or weren't supposed to. Pity filled his heart as he looked down at her, the way she called out, she sounded so desperate. Not angered or hateful, just confused.

Ludi obviously felt different. Turning, the cat tore a branch off of the bark they were sitting on, dropping it down below and watching with a satisfied look as it landed on Nightflight's back. Immediately, the Night Fury jumped two feet in the air, whirling around as if searching for an enemy to defend herself from. She started to backtrack quickly, smashing into a tree and looking dazed. She turned, trying to see what the tree was, and slamming into another in the progress. Hiccup watched, silent. Ludi curled her tail up in amusement.

Finally, Nightflight shook her head to clear it, turning tail and racing away to who-knows-where. But she was grounded, that was sure. She couldn't see anything. She was wandering in the dark, alone, now. The kind of fate that would suit somebody like her, right? Without any friends, without anybody to help her, in the dark, where she can't see anybody, or even herself. She was utterly alone, and it would stay like that, it seemed.

Ludi nodded once, an affirmation, before turning over to Hiccup, ready to start hopping with happiness, it seemed. But she stopped, ears perking as she saw Hiccup's head ducked, as if he couldn't bear to look down at the clearing anymore. She reached out to prod him, but before she could, he spoke, voice low and subdued. "Did you see that?" He asked softly, glancing back into the empty space below them. Ludi didn't do anything, looking at him oddly. "Ludi—she—" He couldn't seem to know what to say. Ludi waited, and eventually he turned to look at her, green eyes shadowed.

"She looked just like me."

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A/N: "I looked at him and I saw myself."

25. Chapter 25

A/N: WOW! Thank you SO much for the reviews! I got so many, I was so happy! :D

Thanks you ^^

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No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, NO! Hyperventilating and gasping, Toothless spun in midair, taking his first break in what seemed like miles and miles. He'd been pushing himself so that he went faster than he ever had before, having started that a long time ago. His wings were screaming with exhaustion, trying to fold in on themselves and just take a rest. He floundered in the air clumsily, having to concentrate with all his might to keep flying and not just drop right down into the sea down below. Gasping sharply, Toothless let out a roar that echoed throughout the night. "HICCUP! WHERE ARE YOU!" He screamed, his voice starting to edge close to hysteria.

Hiccup couldn't be gone! Toothless had never gone that fast in well, he didn't really remember! He'd gotten close to that speed, and yet the sudden burst had even surprised him. The fear and adrenaline that had powered him before was starting to melt away like water, leaving him sapped for energy and unable to go on much longer. But he couldn't just stop, Hiccup was in danger, he could be dead by now! The thought tore Toothless's heart into halves, a ripping, painful sensation that seared through his chest. He ducked his head low, starting to lose altitude as his wings started to fail on themselves. "Why is it always me that gets us into trouble?" He whispered thickly, emotion welling up in his throat, creating a lump that wasn't going to get cleared easily. "Why is it always me that puts you in danger? Gets you in trouble?"

What would be happening if he had just stayed back with Nightflight? Forgotten Hiccup and everything in Berk, and just lived the way a Night Fury normally lived? Hiccup would have Ludi, a pet that would never get him into life-threatening situations like the ones that Toothless pushed him into. Nightflight would be happy and content, living with him and the rest of the pack. And maybe Toothless would have been happy that way too. If he was blind to his former life, and just hadn't remembered that way things were maybe this wouldn't be happening now. Maybe everything would just be much better if he hadn't been so selfish.

He looked down at the water almost numbly, watching it get closer and closer. His body weighed a million tons, he couldn't fly any more if he even wanted to. Without a chance of him finding Hiccup, the village breaking underneath his feet, and everything he's ever loved falling apart, what point was there? Where would he go? Nowhere. He couldn't go anywhere. He couldn't live without Hiccup without him would be living without a purpose. Without Mistyeyes without Shadowclaw. All of his friends, he had no idea what to do

anymore.

"Hey!" A shrill voice squeaked, barely reaching his ears where he was. At first, he didn't respond to it, too wrapped-up in his own self-pity to give a notice. But the voice called out again, familiar. It was so familiar, it made new strength flood through his muscles, his eyes snapping open at once, hope and happiness flooding into the green orbs like an open dam. It was him! It was him! Shooting upwards faster than he thought possible, Toothless raced forward to where he heard the voice, fast as a lightening bolt. "Hey! I'm over here! Where are you?" The voice called out, nearly cracking at the high volume it was reaching.

"Hiccup!" Toothless yelled, skidding to a stop as the voice got closer. "I can't believe you-" He broke off, eyes widening slowly, horror and terror replacing the happiness that had filled them a heartbeat ago. A wall of Night Furies loomed over him, glowering sharply down at him, claws glinting like daggers and fangs bared. Growls and suspicious looks were flashed his way, and Toothless wildly tried to think of him fighting them all off. Or flying to the village to try and warn all of Berk before the army could catch up to him. If reinforcements were coming to replace the Night Furies at Berk right now—there was no more hope, at all. The village had spent its last night, the Night Furies were just too strong, it seemed. Toothless cringed away from the sight. "Why?" He whispered underneath his breath. What had he done to deserve this!? What had ANY of them done to deserve this kind of end!?

"Because I'm just so darn smart!" The joyous chirp made Toothless freeze, pausing a moment before slowly turning, shocked now, instead of scared. The familiar green eyes bored into him, the same trilling voice filled with laughter. He was really here. Shadowclaw did a neat little twirl in the air, spinning and flipping a moment before adding onto what he said, not even reacting to Toothless's half-dead look as the older dragon stared at the younger. "I went all the way back to the island! I flew fast, because I knew we didn't have a lot of time! These are the dragons that are against Nightflight, they said they'll help us defend Berk if we let them go in peace! If we take care of Nightflight, they'll aid in driving the others away!" The dragon beside Shadowclaw, a light brown color, looked at him with admiring green eyes.

"W-What!?" Toothless blustered, a smile spreading over his face. "Really!? Shadowclaw, I thought you went to join the Pack again! How did you do this? I can't believe I didn't think of this, this is amazing!" The words came too fast, Shadowclaw waiting for the elder one to finish before even trying to speak. His eyes were glimmering with self-pride, and he looked ready to burst. But behind that was a sense of determination that exceeded his age, a grim sort of look that they all seemed to adopt when this all started.

"I went back so I could find a way to get back here! This is Leafdapple," He tilted his head over to the side, indicating the small brown dragon fluttering in the air beside him. She averted eye contact with Toothless, looking a little uncomfortable as she did so. He frowned slightly, but didn't say anything, turning back to Shadowclaw. He was a little lost for words, blanching down at the little dragon as he continued to explain what was happening, words tumbling out of his mouth in a rush. "she told me that there were Night Furies back at the original island that we all lived on! That

they would probably help us drive Nightflight out!" He jerked his head back to the group behind him, the large group that now filled Toothless with more energy than he could contain. "They agreed to help us! If Nightflight is out of the picture, maybe the two sides will be able to join together again! You gotta lead us back to the island!"

"B-Butâ€¦" Toothless hesitated moment, green eyes wide with indecision as he looked from the dragons, to the way he had been going. He looked at the Night Furiesâ€¦all of them together. They showed a possible outcome for the villageâ€¦a future of them actually making it through. A million lives could be saved tonight, both from the village, and the Night Furies that were underneath Nightflight's influence. Staring a moment, Toothless closed his eyes, ducking his head close to his chest. He'd been flying so long trying to find Hiccup. Was he really going to give his human up this easily?

"â€¦Pleaseâ€¦" He whispered, so low that even Shadowclaw couldn't hear. "Just give me a little bit more time. I'll come back for you, I promise." Opening his eyes a little reluctantly, he drew himself up, composing himself for one more moment. But they couldn't waste any more time than they had already. "Follow me, we have to hurry, the island is getting worse and worse the longer we stay here." The other Night Furies shared glances, but did not object to him taking the lead. As a whole, they turned the way Toothless had come, the large black dragon taking the lead as he shot back the way he'd flown over. The others followed, strong and ready to fight to get back their rightful ways of life.

"I'm so sorryâ€¦" Toothless thought, squeezing his eyes shut tightly as he flew. "Just hang on for me. I'll be right back."

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"Be quiet!" Hiccup hissed sharply, glaring back at Ludi. The cat was curled up in a tight little ball, meowing every so often as if to remind Hiccup that she hadn't eaten in forever. The soot and ash from the fire back at home had long since washed away from her fur, thanks to the unwanted fall into the ocean. But it was drying in odd clumps, and every time that Ludi made a move to try and smooth it out, she wrinkled her nose at the sharp tang of saltwater, giving up at once. She's tried doing that about six times in the past hour. So she basically looked like a weird hedgehog. Ludi snapped her mouth shut, resting her head on her paws glumly, looking more than cross.

"What? You think that I want to be in this situation either!?" Hiccup demanded, glowering over sharply at the cat, who ignored him fixedly. He went on, not caring whether Ludi was even bothering to listen, or if he was just talking to himself. "We're stuck in the middle of nowhere without a way home, we have no means of any kind of food, everyone on Berk may be dead, we have another dragon lose on the island that wants to KILL us, and I CANT GET THIS STUPID FIRE TO LIGHT!" He slammed down the sticks he was attempting to rub together, glaring at the wood sourly. "It's not even possible, what is this stupid thing!? Rubbing two pieces of wood together? Who thought of that!? Somebody really bored, that's whoâ€¦!"

Ludi eyed him sourly where she sat, shivering pointedly in his direction. Her words seemed to slam Hiccup right in the face: "It's

YOUR fault we're here." Or maybe that wasn't what she thoughtâ€|maybe that's just what he figured. He sighed heavily, shoulders slumping as the anger inside of him melted into a sad feeling. "I know." He mumbled, Ludi perking at his new tone of voice. "I'm sorry, Ludi." He reached over, rolling his hand slowly over the grass, not burnt, for once. "If I hadn't ran offâ€|we might not be here. And I know you were just trying to protect me. And I really appreciate that." He glanced over at the cat, who yawned. Forgetting that minor detail, Hiccup shook his head from side to side. "If you hadn't been with meâ€|I'd probably be dead right now. Soâ€|thanks."

Ludi flopped around so that she was laying in his direction, but didn't do anything. She looked dead-tired. After climbing that tree, they had stayed up there for a long time, it was hard for Hiccup to keep himself upright, while Ludi had to cling to branch in order for it not to swing her off, from that way Hiccup was shaking it all around. Hiccup was surprised they managed to stay hidden for that long, the tree was rustling so much. They had made 'camp' right underneath the same tree, in case they needed to climb up again in a rush to avoid Nightflight. If she could even find her way over here again.

Looking over his shoulder at the dark foliage behind him, Hiccup felt a frown pull down his lips again. The way he always did when he thought of Nightflight. But this frown was different, it was pity. A kind of feeling that no Viking should ever feel in his life. Hiccup hadn't felt pity for the Red Death when he and Toothless battled against him, he just saw the flaw in his plan right before they slammed into the giant tail. Nightflight was just as bad as that dragon, in his opinion. She nearly ripped Toothless away from Berk and him, she got way too close in killing him, she was wreaking havoc onto Berk, and she just finished trying to kill him a SECOND time. She could probably match up to any kind of crazy, stupid dragon out there.

And yet he couldn't bring himself to be angry at her. The frown only deepened at the thought, and he closed his eyes, shaking his head back and forth. Something was wrong with him, then. There was no other possible answer to it than that. A real Viking would kill her on sight, without another thought to be given. Hiccup was never like any of the other Vikings, that was sure from the get-go. He didn't know whether he got it from his mother or not, he never met her. And he certainly did not get it from his father. Slouching against the bark of the tree, he held his head in his good hand, pressing down hard. "I'm a screw-up." He growled under hid breath.

Ludi got up at this, trudging over and crawling up to curl into Hiccup's lap. She purred loudly, as if reassuring him that he didn't screw-up ALL the time. Maybe just sometimes. Smiling a little, he reached down and patted her now-salty fur, blinking a little at the odd smell that came off of her. As if catching his thoughts, Ludi abruptly turned, hopping off and spitting at him angrily. "I'm sorry, it's just-" He broke off, smile fading slowly as he perked up. He looked at the trees and undergrowth that surrounded them on all sides, eyes slowly narrowing and flashing down to Ludi. "Ludi, get up into the tree." He whispered, trying to keep his voice calm. The cat blinked, eyes gleaming in the darkness like twin moons. She turned, suddenly much more subdued than before. She blinked owlshly, as if trying to locate the danger herself, to make sure that Hiccup wasn't trying to scare her or anything. Which was a stupid assumption,

Hiccup always gave the punch lines away before they were intended.

A sharp rustle in the brushes sent her reeling, and Ludi spun around faster than a top, shooting upwards and scurrying up the tree as though her tail was on fire. Hiccup reached for the nearest branch, ready to hoist himself up and after her, when he paused, staring at the bark of the tree absently, waiting a moment. Hesitating. The noises of footsteps got louder, and it was no question to who they belonged to. Hiccup tightened his hold on the branch a moment before letting go. He wasn't running this time. He knew better now.

He narrowed his eyes, dropping his hand and whirling around in place, immediately looking into the ruined and scarred face of the dragon that had haunted him for months and months on end.

But they were equals now.

For a moment, the two remained like that. Whether or not Nightflight could even see him at all, she seemed to sense the lack of flight. She knew that he was standing right in front of her. Which led him to wonder how MUCH she could actually see. Maybe outlines? A blurry image? It would make sense. Hiccup's hands clenched and unclenched together, causing his injured shoulder to spark and burn with pain, but he bit the bottom of his lip to keep from yelling out. If he even could. He couldn't remember how to breathe right, Nightflight was looming over him, nearly blocking out the moonlight.

â€|Maybe this was a bad idea.

Nightflight was first to speak, narrowing her eyes to slits, as if she could still see out of them. "You're braver than I took you for, human." She commented, no impressed tone hidden in her voice remotely. She just sounded irritated. "A lot stupider too, it looks like." Hiccup didn't reply, mouth set in a thin line as he stared steadily over to her own faded gaze. Ludi trembled up in the tree, tucking tighter into herself, ducking away from the scene, not able to watch what was unfolding below her. Nightflight flicked her ear, smirking now. "You aren't going to even try and run? Or maybe you want you BEG for you life like you did in the caves so long ago, hmm?"

Hiccup stiffened at this, stomach twisting into knots at the memories that crammed into his head. Nightflight seemed to notice this, looking much more than satisfied at the mental game she had started. "Well, you were so very LUCKY that Toothless was there to save you, aren't you?" She mused, tilting her head to the side slightly, a mock expression of sympathy etched on her face. But then she snickered once again. "But he isn't here for you now, is he? He let you go without much of a fight, huh? Some friend, right?"

Hiccup managed to find his voice this time. Anger welled up inside of him, and he drew himself up, green eyes burning with evergreen fire. "Toothless is ten times the dragon you'll ever HOPE of being!" He snapped, taking a step forward so that he was closer. Nightflight seemed surprised at the sudden draw of courage, not seeing the way he had changed before he talked. As soon as he spoke, she leapt with surprise, blind to the world around her. But she recovered quickly, as if she never had any sort of shock from the sudden action.

"Well, maybe I'll make the extra effort to bring your body back to

him, then." She purred.

The words blurted out of his mouth before he could stop himself. "If you could even make it back to the island! You'd fall into the water just like you did before!" He clapped his hand over his mouth immediately, eyes widening as he stepped back again. Nightflight stiffened for a moment, straight as a board. Anger creased over her face, and her wings splayed out behind her, blocking out even more light. Ludi plopped her paws over her eyes, not wanting to look at what would happen next. Hiccup opened his mouth to say something, apologize? Wasn't the best option, and it didn't make much sense. But still, it was better than nothing. But before he could do anything, Nightflight lunged forward, claws glinting in the darkness before they buried themselves right beside Hiccup's head, sinking deep into the bark.

Hiccup gasped, short of air, suddenly. His eyes were as big as the moon that Nightflight was blocking, and he pressed himself against the trunk of the tree, starting to flinch away from the beast. Nightflight growled underneath her breath, tugging backwards, as if to try and yank her claws out of the tree, but they seemed stuck. For a minute, Hiccup wondered whether she was meaning to hit him in the first place, and just couldn't see him. But she stopped trying, Hiccup couldn't tell.

Instead, she leaned in close, nearly nose-to-nose with the boy, who was pressed up against the tree as far as he could go. Any farther, and he would just melt right into it. Which seemed like the better option as of right now. "Say that again." She growled. Her voice was so low, Hiccup was sure he would not have heard it under normal circumstances. But the whole forest was silent, as if holding its breath as it watching the scene playing out. Even Ludi was quiet for once, Hiccup doubted that Nightflight even knew she was anywhere close to here.

But Hiccup figured he might as well make his point if he was going to die. It wasn't like Nightflight would let him live anyway. Glancing up to where Ludi was, Hiccup closed his eyes a moment, thinking out a small goodbye that he hoped she got. Ludi's eyes gleamed down at him, sad and confused. But she of all people should know that Hiccup had no chance either right now. "If I wasn't there to save your hide back there, you would have drowned in the ocean, and you know it!" He yelled, voice cracking, which he hoped she didn't notice. "You can't do anything now that my PET CAT wounded you!"

Nightflight growled, roaring with anger and shock that Hiccup would have the guts to say something like that to her face. She fumed, thrashing her tail back and forth decisively as she glowered down at the child who had made so many problems for her. HER. A Night Fury! The thought made her lip twitch with disgust. The child deserved to be blasted right off of the ground he stood on! But then again—she shook her head rapidly. No. She bared her teeth once more, a guttural snarl making Hiccup tremble against the wood. She drew herself up, taking a deep breath. Green gas bubbled in the back of her throat, and Hiccup closed his eyes tightly, body going rigid as he braced himself for the end of it.

A fury-filled roar came next, and the sonic sound of a purple blast shooting from Nightflight's mouth. And yet Hiccup didn't feel anything. Hesitantly, like an unprepared child would do, he opened

his eyes slowly, grimacing as he braced himself. But he perked at once, turning and looking over at the pile of wood he had thrown down in irritation a while ago. It was now a blazing fire. Nightflight ripped her claws out of the tree, glaring hotly over at him. Hiccup opened his mouth, but nothing came out. There were no words that he could have asked, he was too shocked.

"There." She growled, before he could try and manage words. She started to leave, steps leaving large imprints in the ground from her stomping. "I let you live, we're even now. And by the time I come back here, you would leave, if you're smart. Don't think I'll let you off again. I owe you nothing, now." Without another word, she turned, blundering away into the foliage and disappearing within an instant, leaving Hiccup standing alone, still cowering against the tree.

For a while, the only noise was the crackle of the fire, snapping and popping through the silence. Ludi leaped down from the tree, landing heavily on Hiccup's good shoulder, which caused fire to blossom in his other one. He gasped sharply, and Ludi squealed, turning and jumping on the ground before she could do anything else wrong. She paused a moment, looking after Nightflight, before turning back to Hiccup with wide eyes. She was asking him what he thought they should do. Taking a deep breath, Hiccup steeled himself, determination settling inside of him.

Stooping down, he picked up Ludi, settling the cat on his shoulder with a grimace of pain. But he pushed it aside, looking the way Nightflight had gone with a thoughtful look on his face. Ludi let out a small mew, questioning and confused. Hiccup shook his head, and started forward, limping on his bad leg. "Come on." He muttered, walking slowly the way Nightflight had raced off to.

26. Chapter 26

A/N: Thank you for all the reviews, once more! They make me so excited to update! ^^

And all the new followers and watchers as well! Thank you to them ^^

When Finals start around the corner, I don't know if I'll have enough time to update, it all depends.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Mistyeyes panted, staggering where she stood in the clearing. The fighting mass of bodies was starting to shake in her vision, wavering back and forth like she was doing spins through the air. She shook her head back and forth roughly, trying to clear it of its fuzzy feeling, growling deep in her throat. She couldn't focus, every time that she blinked, the images behind her eyelids would go from Hiccup, to Shadowclaw, to Toothless. She had no idea where they were. Was Shadowclaw here? Fighting amongst all these other big dragons? Did somebody kill him already? The thought nearly sent her tripping right over herself, eyes widening as she scanned the clearing with a better eye. "Shadowclaw?" She called out tentatively, peering through the smoke as she searched in vain for the small body of the little dragon. But she didn't see any younglings that looked familiar to her.

Mistyeyes felt the despair drag down her feet, pulling her down angrily, begging for her to just get down on the ground and give up. She forced herself to stay upright, forcing her legs into motion as she started to jog forward. It was like dragging thick blocks of lead behind her as she went, but she shook the thought away roughly. If she didn't think about it, it wouldn't seem so bad. Toothless and everybody else were doing much more dangerous feats right now, the least that Mistyeyes could do was help keep the island safe for as long as she could manage. Which shouldn't be for much longer, really. She only hoped the Vikings would be able to drag themselves away from this losing battle without any kind of fight. Any fight would result in total elimination on both their parts.

Being a dragon, she could see through the smoke easier than the humans could, though it was still pretty challenging to her. Narrowing her eyes through the foggy air, she sought for a glance of somebody important, somebody that Hiccup held close to his heart, praying that they were still up and fighting. She finally saw Snotlout and Tuffnut on their dragons, swooping down every so often, taking a Night fury with them, and chucking them straight back down to the ground when they gained enough altitude in the air. The dragons being attacked were too stunned to catch themselves on the way down, slamming into the ground with enough force to shake the whole island, it seemed. A unique way of fighting while making sure you were unharmed, but it took a lot out of the teens' dragons, it wouldn't be long until they ran out of energy., Mistyeyes thought darkly.

Evidently, Ruffnut had taken it upon herself to make sure Fishlegs didn't die. The teen was on another dragon, not her own. She zoomed past Fishlegs and Meatlug on her borrowed ride, shouting and yelling at them to go faster, sounding like a coach of a sport. But they seemed to be too scared to try and quit, zooming faster than Mistyeyes had ever seen Meatlug go, and the dragon was obviously unhappy about that fact. The look on her face was just like if you stuck an eel under her nose and kept it there for a long time. Mistyeyes would have laughed before, but now, she only knew that it was for the best.

Turning, she continued to look through the crowd, searching for one manâ€¦if he was still alive. Hiccup's father probably meant more to him than the boy would like to admit, if something happened to him, Mistyeyes knew that the boy would be heartbroken for the rest of his life. She finally sought out the man, stiffening at once, eyes widening. The man was facing off with two Night Furies at once, and no help was coming to aid him. The other Vikings were too wrapped up with their own problems to see that the chief needed help.

Shooting forward with renewed speed, Mistyeyes leaped forward, catching one of the Night Furies by the shoulder, yanking them down to the ground and pinning them there. She bared her teeth angrily, satisfaction welling up inside of her as she saw that the dragon's expression immediately change from anger to that of terror and fear. "M-Mistyeyes!?" The female shouted, surprise and shock cracking her voice. Mistyeyes started, feeling an odd sort of guilt that she did not know this dragon's name. She knew her's. "You're really here? Fighting for the humans!?" Mistyeyes flattened her ears, looking away suddenly. The way the dragon put emphasis on 'really' made it seem like Nightflight was spreading rumors around her. She wondered how

many were true. How many other dragon would be here looking for her. How many were specifically looking for her to take out revenge.

But she shook herself, fresh fire of determination surging up inside her. "That's right!" She snarled, putting her nose right into the dragon's face. "I'm a dragon of Berk now, and if you know what's good for you, you'll leave this island and never come back!" The words ended in a roar, and Mistyeyes shoved the female up to her feet, away from Stoick and herself with as much force as she could muster. "Get out!" She screeched, watching angrily as the female staggered slightly, eyes wide as she looked at Mistyeyes blankly. Then she turned tail and ran, but back into the crowd, not away from the island. Which was close enough.

Mistyeyes turned, snarling, ready to attack the next dragon that got in her way, when she gasped, seeing that the other dragon already beat her to it. The Night Fury was shooting straight for her throat, claws gleaming in the smoke. She was rigid with surprise, unable to move as she stayed rooted to the spot. She closed her eyes, bracing herself for the burst of pain that was sure to come, when there was a sharp scraping noise, like metal on metal. She perked, stiffening as she saw Stoick standing in front of her, almost protectively. His axe was raised, as was his shield, and Mistyeyes had to lean to the side to see what had happened.

The Night Fury stumbled, catching itself before it could hit the ground with a thud. It groaned and whined, looking down in alarm at its feet, which were now missing an important part. Claws. Mistyeyes's ears perked, surprised as she looked at the Night Fury. She didn't ever think of a human being able to do something like that before. She was too busy speculating to see that the dragon was puffing up, readying itself to shoot a deadly blow down at Stoick, who was just beginning to notice the change in the Night Fury. Mistyeyes pounced forward, shoving the dragon away rapidly, watching in relief as it shot its purple beam straight up into the sky instead of its original target. She shot her own fireball after it, watching with deadly satisfaction as it rolled with the impact. It wasn't enough to defeat it, but it was enough to make sure he wouldn't come back very soon.

Mistyeyes turned to look back at Stoick, long and hard. The chief had never really liked her, she had known that from the beginning. With the other female Night Fury brought to the island, it was no wonder he allowed her to stay at all. But he had just saved her, he must think a little bit more of her now. As if to answer her question, Stoick gave a small little nod of acknowledgement to her. She stared at him a moment, heart breaking. "Stoick, your-" She broke off, biting her tongue. Of course, he wouldn't understand her. She couldn't tell him about Hiccup, he would have to find out himself. But how long would it take? Mistyeyes wondered.

She didn't have long to, though. A million roars seemed to split through the night sky, making the earth tremble and shake back and forth like an earthquake was ripping it apart. Stoick's eyes widened just like Mistyeyes's, and with her keen eyesight, the dragon could see a wave of dragons rushing forward out of the clouds, streaking down to the island. It was clear that these dragons were full of new energy, eyes gleaming with anger and claws unsheathed as they hit the ground running. For a moment, Mistyeyes was filled with so much dread, she thought she was going to implode right on the spot.

But she spotted Toothless leading the group, and flying right beside him was Shadowclaw. Both of them were back, and Mistyeyes truly realized what this was. It was the help they needed. The other Night Furies leapt right into battle without a second glance, it was clear that this came as a surprise to their attackers. For once, Mistyeyes let her shoulders slump in relief as the slim bodies of the other dragons wove around her. They were safe, it looked like. For now.

Toothless looked ready to turn right back and fly away, when he came short, looking over at Mistyeyes. She immediately sprang away from Stoick's side, who looked a little bit more than confused, it seemed. She bounded over to Shadowclaw and Toothless, a wide grin stretched over her face. She dove forward to Shadowclaw, bringing him close and smothering him against her side while Toothless looked on, looking kind of impatient. "I missed you so much!" Mistyeyes purred loudly, rasping her tongue over his head like a mother would do. The youngling twisted, trying to stretch himself away from her, to no avail. "I was so sad when you left!" She looked up, eyes lighting considerably as she looked at Toothless. She stared at him hopefully, waiting for him to give an answer. Or waiting for Hiccup to slide off of the dragon's back. But she knew the answer as soon as she looked into his eyes.

They were dead, the light in them had dimmed, it seemed. Mistyeyes's heart broke, and closed her eyes for a moment before breaking away from Shadowclaw, walking over to Toothless and pushing her head underneath the dragon's own comfortingly. "It'll be okay." She murmured, trying to push some of her newfound optimism into him. "He'll find a way to get back to us, I'm sure he will. You just need to give him time, okay?" When Toothless did not reply, Mistyeyes drew back, looking at the Night Fury with her ears flattened to her head.

The dragon looked like a million weights had been put on his shoulders. "I couldn't find him." He mumbled, voice small and subdued. "I triedâ€¦but they were going too fast. I couldn't keep up." He looked back at his tail, a sudden rush of fury sweeping through him. "I don't know this tail well enough to use it properly!" He yelled, his voice rising to a roar. Shadowclaw flattened against Mistyeyes in surprise, but the female just closed her eyes calmly, listening silently. "I'm used to Hiccup being with me! Showing me what to do even when I don't need him to! Without him, I'mâ€¦I'm not as FAST, I'm not as QUICK to think about things, I can't do HALF the stuff I can with him guiding me! I thought keeping this dumb thing would help, but it only made it worse!"

"Without the tail, you wouldn't have found Shadowclaw and the others." Mistyeyes said, flicking her tail back to the crowd behind her. "You've saved all us just now, and you wouldn't have done that if you were grounded on the island. We'd all be dead if it weren't for that tail." Shadowclaw drew himself up, as if to start claiming that he would have found the island on his own. But Mistyeyes clamped her tail backwards sharply, knocking him over and cutting off whatever else he was going to say. It surely wouldn't have helped her cause.

"I don't care." Toothless growled, the new tone of voice making Mistyeyes perk worriedly. "I would sacrifice the whole village to

save Hiccup." The dragon murmured thickly, closing his eyes tightly. "If Hiccup dies I'll never forgive myself. If Hiccup dies I'll be grounded forever." He paused before saying the last part, turning and looking down at the fake half of his tail. His eyes narrowed, and he pushed himself up slowly, raising his feet and crashing down on the tail with enough force to send the metal shattering, scattering away in a million separate pieces. Toothless watched with an indifferent expression, not even pausing to stare at the ruined tail before turning back to Mistyeyes, unblinking.

"Toothless!" Mistyeyes shrieked. "Now you'll never be able to go out and look for Hiccup again!"

"I couldn't find him the first time, how do you think I'll find him the second time!"

"Because you had me with you!" Mistyeyes blustered. "I could have helped you!"

"Forget it, Mistyeyes, it'll do nothing."

Mistyeyes exploded. "Dang it, Toothless! If you haven't gotten around it yet, I'm going to be here a long time! And I'm not going anywhere anytime soon! I'm gonna be here with you for a long time, because darn it, you NEED me! Whether you know it or not, you obviously need somebody here to make sure your head is connected to your tail! And if you so ever don't mind, I would love to be the one with you to make sure you're going the right way!" Toothless's eyes widened, stunned a moment as he looked at her in alarm. Mistyeyes's glare slowly melted into a stunned look as well, and she drew herself up, trying to forget what she just said. "If YOU aren't going to find Hiccup, then I will. Without you." She snapped, digging her claws into the ground.

Mistyeyes shoved Toothless out of the way a little rougher than she intended to. The Night Fury staggered to the side, still too shocked to get a word or two out. Shadowclaw stayed where he was, looking at Mistyeyes with a blank expression. He felt like he was missing something. But he didn't say anything, ears flattening to his head as he realized that this was sort of beyond him. But Toothless found himself, whipping around quickly to look back after Mistyeyes. "I don't want you going alone!" He called after her. But that didn't seem to comfort the Night Fury at all.

She turned, glaring daggers at him. "Then maybe you shouldn't have broken your tail like that, you idiot!" She snapped angrily. "What's the matter with you, anyway! Every time I try to get closer to you, you reject me! What, is it something I do?" She asked in a huff, Toothless's mouth set in a thin line. When he didn't reply, she groaned, pressing on. "Is it because I'm not good enough for you?" Still, nothing. Mistyeyes blinked a moment, eyes growing suddenly sad. "Is it because I'm not Nightflight?" She asked in a hushed tone.

Toothless's eyes widened slightly, and his mouth hung open a moment, shocked at the question. And, he realized, with a guilty jump, that he did not have an answer for the question. The longer he waited and stared, the sadder Mistyeyes seemed to grow, and finally, she turned, shoulders hunching tightly. "Save it." She spat out, ears slicking down to her head. "Don't even bother, you don't even have to answer."

She growled, looking as though she were about to take off right then. Toothless shook himself, pacing forward, about to call back to her. But Shadowclaw yelped loudly, taking both of the dragons' attention away from the newfound source of drama.

"Look out!" The little dragon yipped, flattening himself down to the ground at once.

Toothless followed his action, eyes wide with confusion. But Mistyeyes hesitated, too angry and upset to think clearly. Suddenly, shooting out of the smoke that billowed around them, a Night Fury pounced forward, tackling Mistyeyes with a feral growl. The female shrieked with shock and pain, rolling with the impact underneath the stranger's relentless claws. Toothless snapped into action at once, jumping into the fray and clawing at the attacker, trying in a panicked frenzy to get him off of Mistyeyes. And as he did so, he realized that he knew this Night Fury. Knew him all too well. "Asher!" He snarled, anger and fury lacing every part of voice.

The male whipped around to look at him, smiling grimly back over at him. "Toothless, I didn't think I'd be able to share another pleasure of being in your presence." He purred, leaving Mistyeyes, who was in a crumpled heap on the ground. Toothless's worried gaze rested on her form for only a moment, before turning back to glower over at the dark gray dragon fixedly. "Nightflight wanted to be the one to see you first, I suppose that she didn't. You appear to remain intact still." He laughed, voice void of humor.

The mention of the dragoness made Toothless wince inwardly, picturing Hiccup's last horrified look before they disappeared. Shoving it aside roughly, Toothless drew himself up, hoping to look much more sure of himself than he felt. "Clear out of here, Asher." He snapped. "Look around you, we're the ones with the upper hand now. And we're going to win this time, you might as well just give up." His eyes were drawn back to Mistyeyes, Shadowclaw frantically looking her over for her wounds. "Get out." He repeated, more firmly. "Or I'll MAKE you." His claws gripped the charred grass tightly, and he growled deep in his throat.

"Hah. A petty little human dragon will be the one to defeat ME?" Asher asked, amusement overlapping across his voice. "I'd love to see you try." He growled, crouching low to the ground. Toothless's eyes narrowed, accepting the challenge as he flattened himself down as well. For a moment, they both sized up one another, waiting. Toothless finally broke the stare-down as he shot forward, grabbing Asher and trying to pin him down to the ground. The dragon retaliated, though, rearing up on his hind-legs and swiping a rough blow across Toothless's cheek. The Night Fury hissed with pain, one eye closed, but he swept his tail forward, knocking Asher's legs out from underneath him and watching coldly as his opponent crashed into the ground.

Dashing forward, Toothless grabbed Asher's wing before the other dragon could try to push himself up. Gritting his teeth together tightly, Toothless ripped his claws down the length of the wing sloppily, Asher hissing loudly with pain as he whirled around, trying to lash back at the Night Fury. Toothless threw himself forward, repeating the process with the other wing before Asher finally managed to throw him off, raking his claws down his shoulder as he snagged him off. Snarling, Toothless flattened himself to the ground,

digging his claws into the grass as he glowered over at Asher, remaining still.

It took a moment for the gray dragon to finally bring his composure back. But when he did, he straightened, smirking over at Toothless as he swaggered over to the defeated Night Fury, triumph gleaming in his eyes. "Give up already?" He asked, stopping to loom over him. "I would have thought the Great Toothless would have 'bested' me by now. I'm slightly disappointed, actually." He curled his upper lip down at the dragon, but Toothless clamped his teeth shut, refusing to even move a single muscle.

Mistyeyes's voice drifted over, sounding a little scared. "Toothless?" She asked weakly.

Asher flapped his ruined wings excitedly, seeming to get a kick out of the scene in front of him. "Don't worry, Mistyeyes, you can watch me kill him." The Night Fury sneered, still chuckling to himself. "And then you're next. You and every other human on this miserable spot of an island." Toothless narrowed his eyes slightly, body aching by now. Asher noticed the brief flicker of pain, and he snickered once more before throwing himself on top of Toothless. The Night Fury pushed backwards, locking himself against Asher as the two spun and rolled on the ground in a wrestling heap.

They rolled and tossed on the ground, snarling and slapping each other. Mistyeyes realized with a form of dread that the two were getting much too close to the edge of the island. They were going to fall right off. She struggled to push herself up, but gave up halfway, the pain too much for her to bear. Her eyes shone with desperation, and she called out in a strained voice. "Toothless! Look out!" She shrieked, eyes widening as they got closer and closer. With Toothless unable to fly on his own, he would be done for. The look on Shadowclaw's face seemed to echo her own thoughts, the little youngling making a move to go and help them. But that would only make it worse. Mistyeyes reached over quickly, clamping her paw down tightly on his tail, keeping him there. Instead, she raised her head to the village, where the other Night Furies had gone in their aid. "Help!" She shouted frantically. "Help!"

Toothless caught sight of the ocean raging below them, realizing the same thing Mistyeyes was trying to tell him with a start. He couldn't breathe underneath all this weight, he was going to suffocate! How was he going to get out of this situation? He closed his eyes a moment, feeling the ground starting to come to a stop, felt it slope downwards slightly. Suddenly, the thought slammed into him, and he abruptly slammed his back legs into the earth, feeling the top part of himself still rolling.

Asher stiffened at the odd move, meeting Toothless's eyes with a scared sort of look. Toothless paused a moment, hesitating, before shoving Asher away from him with all the strength he could muster. Asher was unbalanced, and Toothless hooked his limbs back to himself, whirling around and kicking Asher's legs out with a grunt. Toothless panted with relief and exhaustion, eyes wide as he realized how close he was to falling off himself. Looking over his shoulder, Toothless started, bounding over to the edge of the grass and leaning over, ears perked.

Asher was clinging to the side of the island, eyes bigger than the

moon as he stared up desperately at Toothless. He opened his mouth to say something, a strangled whining noise coming out instead. He was too scared to say anything. Toothless narrowed his eyes, close to caving in and pulling the Night Fury to safety. Leaning down close, Toothless's eyes bored into Asher's own. "Do you know where Nightflight was going?" He demanded, voice souring as he said her voice. "Where was she going when she left the island?" When Asher did not reply quick enough, Toothless snarled, pushing his face closer. "TELL ME! I have to know!"

"I-I don't know what you're talking about!" Asher blustered, scrabbling for a hold on the rock face. "I didn't even know that Nightflight left!" Toothless looked more than disappointed, drawing backwards and closing his eyes, letting out the breath he hadn't realized he'd been holding. He started to turn, but stopped at the sound of Asher's alarmed voice once more. "W-Wait! Help me up, please! I-I'm begging you!" He yelped, trying vainly to fly back up and right himself. But his wings were tattered, and he couldn't fly. Just like a ship couldn't go across the ocean with ruined sails.

"You wanna know something interesting, Asher?" Toothless said suddenly, going back to leaning over the edge, over the Night Fury's frightened face. The dragon stared back at him unintelligently, waiting for his answer as he clawed for a grip. "You know how I did that?" He asked, nodding his head to the his wings. When he still didn't answer, Toothless went on, taking a step backwards, much to Asher's alarm. "A HUMAN taught me that move." He didn't wait to see what Asher's face would look like, didn't wait to see whether the dragon would even be remotely changed by it. The statement brought a fresh wave of pain over him, and he swung around, going back over to Mistyeyes.

"Are you alright?" He asked softly, voice hushed by now.

The female looked shocked as well, but raw relief was there in her eyes as well as she looked up at Toothless. "I'll be fine." She murmured, subdued as well. Shadowclaw looked at a loss of what to do, turning his head and looking back over his shoulder at the village. It was still burning, most of the houses reduced to nothing by now. The Vikings had seemed shocked at the amount of new dragons, but they seemed to have found out that they were on their side. Though from where he sat, Shadowclaw could see Stoick giving a hefty blow to one of the Night Furies that was trying to help them. The dragon whirled around, teeth bared as he hissed at the chief. Shadowclaw stiffened, bracing himself to run out to the rescue, which would be a pretty sad rescue. But the dragon showed an immense amount of self-control, ducking his head and melting away in the crowd.

The youngling opened his mouth to say something, but snapped it shut when he turned. Toothless was hunched over, eyes closed tightly, chest moving up and down oddly, as if he'd forgotten how to breathe properly. Mistyeyes had pushed herself up to a sitting position, hesitantly pushing forward and resting her head on Toothless's shoulder comfortingly. Toothless spoke first, voice strangled and raspy. "He's gone, Mistyeyes. I'm never going to see him again." Mistyeyes murmured out a small phrase, too quiet for Shadowclaw to hear, and yet he figured he didn't need to. Toothless mumbled out a reply, digging his claws into the ground as if he needed help standing. "I'll never be whole again without him. And I don't even

think he knows that anymore. I was soâ€|differentâ€|I lost sight of what was really important."

Mistyeyes drew back at this, looking more than hurt by this. She made a move to speak, but then choked it back, substituting it with a simple, slow nod. "I'm sure he knew how much you care about him." She said softly. "Anybody could see how much you two were made for each other. There's no way he could forget it. I'm sure of it." Her eyes were bitter now, and the message behind her words was clear. And I was a fool to think that you could share that much love with anybody but him.

Looking at Toothless, what a wreck he seemed to be, she kept her mouth shut. She didn't want to seem selfish, she just wanted to help him through this. And then she could figure out what to do afterwards. She pushed against him once more, closing her eyes as she did so. "It'll all be okay." She murmured, as if she were talking to a child. "I promise it'll get better."

She didn't know if she was talking to him, or herself.

(~*~) (~*~) (~*~) (~*~)

A/N: I was going to write this much longer, but my friends are coming over, so I copy/pasted it onto another chapter. I just felt bad that I didn't update in a while, so I separated it. The Hiccup part of this chapter will be next chapter, and you just got the Mistyeyes chapter ^^

I hope you like it, and I'm pretty sure I'll get another update out this weekend maybe. I already have two pages out for the next one already considering I already typed some of it, soâ€| XDD

Review! :D

27. Chapter 27

A/N: Once again, I didn't get to link these two chapters together. I'm posting this one right after the other though, so that pretty much makes up for it, in my opinion. O3O

(~*~) (~*~) (~*~) (~*~)

"We're pretty close, I think." Hiccup mumbled, throwing a look back at Ludi, who was leaping elegantly from branch to branch. She was a few feet above of the human, showing off grace that Hiccup could probably pull off if given a million years of practice. Her eyes were narrowed from irritation, anger, and concentration as she pulled off the feat, throwing glares over at Hiccup every so often. She seemed to be a lot grouchier than usual ever since they landed on this island. Which was to be expected, Hiccup figured.

Ludi pushed off of her branch with more force than she had before, the branch whipping back to slap Hiccup's injured shoulder with a glancing blow. But the pain that rocketed through him could have been from a knife instead of a branch. He hissed at once, dropping down to the ground and holding his shoulder tightly. Ludi screeched to a halt, eyes wide as she turned to look back at him. Immediately, she jumped down from the tree, scurrying over to Hiccup with a small

mewl. Her ears were flattened to her head, and she jumped from foot to foot anxiously.

"It's okay, Ludi." He said through his teeth, closing and opening his eyes to try to clear the black spots on his vision. He turned his head, looking down at his shoulder to let out a low groan. The wound had only just begun to try and close, now it was reopened. He grumbled angry words underneath his breath as he pushing himself up with a wince. "Son of a half-troll." He growled, hand coming back to him dyed red. Wiping it away on the trunk of the tree, he turned, looking at Ludi for a moment before managing a grin. "S'fine. It's all good." He started walking again, Ludi having to run to catch up to him. The cat eyed him carefully as she trotted down beside his legs, but didn't stop.

He pressed his hand down on the wound as tight as he could without staggering from it, concentrating on breathing out of his mouth instead of his nose. He was that the smell wouldn't make his normally-queasy stomach too happy. And that was the last thing they needed right now. They NEEDED to get off the island, and for once, Hiccup was out of ideas. He usually had at least something bounce off of and hopefully smack into the answer, but this time he only had one plan. He couldn't swim back to the island, he'd give out within in the house, especially with Ludi in tow and his injury of his arm. He could wait for somebody to finally find him, but even he had no idea where he was, and he didn't see any other island while they were in the air.

The only mode of getting back home was trying to kill him. Yes, she was blinded, but Hiccup was sure that he could get around that little flaw. He got around Toothless's handicap, of course, he could get around Nightflight if he could just prove that whatever grudge she held against him was all for naught. The idea was a stupid one, and one that he probably wouldn't be able to pull off. But he didn't know what else he could do. Ludi was here to protect now, it wasn't just his life in danger. He had to make sure she made it back home too. Which meant he would do everything he could to try and get home before it was too late. The thought made him look down worriedly at Ludi, the cat's ears flicking back and forth irritably, as if there was something on them.

Stooping down, he grabbed Ludi up in his arms tightly, managing to hold her close despite the pain in his shoulder. "I'm sorry, Ludi." He said, the cat's ears finally coming to an stop as she looked over at him, sniffing slightly. "We'll get out of here, it might just take a while." He said, looking over at his shoulder as he spoke. It wasn't doing good with only his shirt covering it up, it needed much more than Hiccup was giving it. The boy sighed, coming to stop as he glowered at the ground. He never seemed to catch a break. No matter which way he looked, there was an obstacle. And now his only hope was on somebody that just threatened his life—|for the millionth time.

"It's a mess." He grumbled underneath his breath. "It always is."

Ludi frowned at this, lowering her head down to rest it on Hiccup's arm glumly. Sometimes Hiccup forgot she could talk, she could do it in her own way, really. Her tail lashed back and forth, and she shuffled nervously. Hiccup was about to say something, if only to

break the silence that was pressing on them, when he shut his mouth abruptly, deciding that making a whole bunch of noise wouldn't be such a good idea right now. He had no idea where Nightflight was, and he hadn't figured out to say to her yet. She probably wouldn't even get to say anything, he thought dryly. She's made it pretty clear on the stance between them.

He adjusted his hold on Ludi before starting forward once again. He drew his hand over her nervously, almost unconsciously doing so. He never noticed before, but he didn't realize how much he missed having Ludi around. He'd been isolated for what seemed like a long time, and the relationships he'd made with everyone slowly dwindled day by day. He was glad that Ludi was here with him at least, he was sure that he would have driven himself crazy if he had been alone. But it was also bad this way; if he couldn't make it, that would mean that she wouldn't make it either. If he went down, he was dragging Ludi down with him as well. He had to watch where he stepped, and right now, that theory wasn't adding up well with their could-be results.

And if he didn't make it back himself, what would happen? What would happen to Astrid? To Toothless and Mistyeyes. The thought made him flinch away, grimacing as if slapped across the face. Toothless would never forgive himself, that much was entirely certain. Toothless got upset whenever it even looked like Hiccup was thinking of what happened in the past. Now that all this had happenedâ€¦ Hiccup shut his eyes tightly as he walked, wishing fiercely that the dragon had not seen him being dragged away by Nightflight. Wishing that he wasn't so stupid as to call out for him. He wasn't thinking most of these days, it seemed.

He hissed as another flash of pain went through him, nearly dropping Ludi as his shoulder went numb for a moment. The cat was jostled, letting out a shrill yelp as she tried to cling to him tighter in order to stay upright. Hiccup winced at the claws Ludi used, but didn't comment, only pulling them off like he always did. The longer he walked, the longer he felt more strained, his shoulder aching from holding Ludi, even though he'd only been holding her for a few minutes. The cat felt like lead in his arms, and he had to strain to hold her up and not let her fall.

The island proved to be much bigger than Hiccup had originally thought it to be. He thought it was a small, isolated spit of land in the middle of nowhere. And it kinda was. But it could almost rival Berk in size, or at least, that was what Hiccup was getting after wandering for almost a whole hour. His arms were failing him, and his left leg was aching from its long use. Ludi was dozing in his arms by now, the day catching up with her as she let out muffled snores into his elbow, despite the way his arms were shaking. He bit his bottom lip as he stumbled on, wondering how the heck the stupid dragon got this far.

There were signs of broken tree limbs and ruts in the ground, he must be getting somewhere. A blind dragon could only go so far, right? But he guessed that that was the problem, really. She could go anywhere and everywhere she wanted. It wasn't like she could see where she was going, right? His thoughts were slowly getting more and more irritated the farther he went along. Which was totally unrelated to the way he was going NOWHERE.

He shook his head back and forth, trying to clear his

thoughts.

Suddenly, he stopped, blinking rapidly as he straightened, the thoughts of pain and exhaustion immediately flying away from his mind. He'd been here before. The lack of movement roused Ludi from her little half-nap, the cat raising her head slowly, bleary eyes slowly scanning the area with sleepy curiosity. Hiccup's green eyes flashed, and he walked slowly forward to stand in front of one of the trees, expression turning sour immediately. "Crap!" He growled, looking around aimlessly for a moment, taking in wherever he was. Ludi was still confused, but remained where she was, stretching the sleepiness out of her limbs even though she'd been taking it easy and laying on him the entire walk.

"We've just gone in the biggest circle I've ever experienced." Hiccup grumbled, irritation showing in every fiber of his being. Ludi woke up at this, starting a moment before souring at once, ears flattening to the sides of her head glumly. Hiccup looked around, trying to figure out which way he went. If he went the opposite, they might actually go somewhere instead of in a circle. This was exactly where he left off, it was kind of ridiculous. He saw the tree that he had wiped his hand off earlier before, the section dyed a dark red by now. He huffed out a sigh, turning and starting back the way he hoped was the correct way. But immediately, he tripped forward, Ludi flying out of his arms as he slammed into the ground.

The cat landed on her feet, of course, but the same could not be said for Hiccup. The boy picked himself up off the ground, spitting out clumps of grass that had managed to smash into his mouth. Ludi trotted over to stand beside his feet as he got up, and Hiccup glared down at the ground, wondering what had caused him to trip like that. Something on the ground caught his eye, and he immediately dropped to his knees, having to lean down low to get a sense of what it was.

It was an animal track. He was so busy worrying about Nightflight, he had forgotten to take into consideration the possibility of there being something else on the island. He'd never heard anything before now, never seen anything move in the bushes. But it seemed like the island was getting more and more dangerous than what he'd originally thought the more he walked on. He should have just stayed back by the makeshift camp, he thought dully, glancing back through the foliage. But going back would mean this would all be for nothing, there was no way he was going to give up and go back.

Ludi leaned close to the print, sniffing it rather noisily. Hiccup was about to push himself up, when the cat straightened, ears flicking back and forth as she shuffled her paws. Just like she had been doing at this spot before. She'd seemed nervous, but Hiccup didn't really pay much attention to it back then. He wasn't about to do it again, when suddenly, he took a better look at the picture. It was more than one animal print, there was a lot of them, smudged away in the ground so much that they were almost invisible. They were all heading the way they'd gone, and Hiccup slowly raised his eyes to the red spot on the tree, a nasty feeling growing in his stomach as his thoughts started to race.

He turned to his shoulder, an almost accusing look on his face. It was still bleeding. Not as much, after all this time, but he had been bleeding bad before. Whatever these tracks belonged to could have followed them. How long did it follow them? Or was it still after

them? The thought formed a lump in his throat, and he instinctively reached out to Ludi, whether to comfort himself or to keep her out of harm's way. A little bit of both, maybe. The cat leapt into him easily, seeing that something was wrong. Her ears were flicking a little faster now, and a strange look was coming over her face. Hiccup's heart rammed against his chest heavily, and he jumped to his feet as there was a small noise of a twig snapping behind him.

He swirled around, tightening his hold on Ludi and forcing himself forward as fast as he could. He ran and stumbled, blood pulsing in his ears as he heard a sudden round of barking screeching behind him. He quickened his pace, sprinting as fast as he could possibly manage with his fake leg. Ludi jostled in his arms, but only clung to him harder, tucking her nose under his elbow and hiding from the scene. Her fur was bushed up to make her look twice her size, she'd never been this stunned before. Other than in the cave, she'd never really had a reason to be scared. But now, she looked ready to drop dead.

A thrumming of many paws were gaining on him, he wasn't going fast enough. He started to panic, gasping for air and trying to drink in enough to fill his lungs. He risked a glance behind him, an obvious mistake. They were wild dogs, about three or four of them, all gaining on him. The shoot of fear sweeping through him did enough to speed him up a little bit, putting a little more distance between them. He had no idea how to get out of this one. He'd heard dogs howling in Berk's woods sometimes, but he'd never come into contact with any of them. They didn't bother them, and vice versa. These must have been a different kind, cause they were sure as heck bothering him now.

His heart was going to jump right out of his chest, and he was already starting to slow, he could feel his legs starting to drag behind him. He didn't remember the last time he slept, and it was starting to show. As the fear's effect slowly melted off, he couldn't be as fast. Ludi stirred in his arms, and Hiccup's heart gave a painful tug for the cat. Was this the end of the line? With his injured shoulder, he didn't know the probability of him being able to fight them off with his little knife. It wasn't much of a fair fight, him against three other opponents. Let alone three wild animals. The only thing he could face three of and possibly win would be Fishlegs, and that sadly wasn't the case here.

He veered off to the right, hoping to through them off long enough to make it up a tree or something. It was the most he could do right now, and he had to keep Ludi in mind. She was a good climber, she'd be out of harm's way this way. Hiccup might take longer to get up there, but he'd make it in time. He was formulating the plan in his mind, and wasn't looking where he was going, tripping over a tree root poking out of the ground and immediately flying forward. This was the second time he'd tripped in an hour, it was like he was going for some sort of record.

But there was something there to catch him this time. Hiccup slammed into something nearly hard as a rock, slamming into the ground and rubbing his head with a wounded expression. He opened his eyes with a grimace, only to widen them once more. Nightflight stood, looming over him, looking utterly confused. He didn't think that she knew it was him yet, but she was slowly coming to that conclusion. She smelled the air a moment before fury overcame her face, opening her mouth to let out what was surely an ear-splitting roar. But the dogs

cut her off, Nightflight's expression changing to something close to fear as they exploded into the clearing. Hiccup immediately grabbed Ludi, pushing himself rapidly so that they were behind Nightflight. A poor hiding spot at best.

Ludi dove for cover behind Hiccup, curling into a tight ball and staying that way, refusing to come out of her shell. He finally had a chance to sit down, and yet he was stiff as a board. Nightflight had took her stance, crouching low to the ground as she growled at the dogs, who had formed a semi-circle around her. Her head swung from side to side as she tried to figure out what was going on, and for once, Hiccup cured the way that she couldn't see. Between him and her, there wasn't a lot to work with. This was a losing battle from the start. It always had been, really.

The first dog lashed forward, managing to slash Nightflight's cheek before hopping away. The dragon roared with anger, whirling around to face the direction it had come from. Another dog took its chance, repeating the movement on the other side of her face. Hiccup watched with a sinking heart as the dragon whirled back and forth, unable to pinpoint the exact attacker before they could strike. He'd been able to see the way she fought before, with her eyesight perfectly clear. And it was nowhere near as bad as this. She was losing, and it would take NO time at all for her to give up. And when she gave up, Hiccup would one: have to face the dogs himself, and two: be stuck on this island forever because his mode of transportation was gone. Neither of which he was too keen on doing, as a matter of fact.

The dogs were just playing with her by now, dancing in and out of her meager slice of vision she had. Nightflight was roaring obscenities at the animals, getting more and more frustrated as she strained to keep herself moving. Hiccup felt himself leaning forward, watching the dogs carefully, green eyes thoughtful instead of scared now. And right when one of the dogs raised its paw to strike again, Hiccup let out a shrill yell. "Your left!" He snapped, the bark almost coming out as an order. Nightflight must have been desperate or not thinking. She whipped to the left without even thinking or hesitating on it. She swiped her claws out in a massive arc, catching the dog and tossing him to the end of the clearing with an angry blow.

The dog yipped immediately, staggering a moment before turning, streaking away from the dragon with its tail between its legs. Nightflight straightened at the sound, looking both surprised and pleased with her new ground she'd reached. Hiccup blinked as well, stunned. She'd listened to him? Or did she even realize that it WAS him talking? But the thought slipped from his mind as another dog jumped forward, charging for Nightflight from the other side. "Other side!" He yelled urgently, eyes widening as he felt himself lean forward. "It's on your right!"

Nightflight immediately twisted, lashing forward at the very last moment and causing the animal to rocket backwards, smashing into a tree and doing a full flip before dropping onto the ground in a heap. It shot to its feet, limping away rapidly as it howled and whine pathetically. It was only then that Nightflight seemed to realize that she wasn't doing this good on her own. She stiffened for a moment, and Hiccup immediately regretted even saying anything. She might not have noticed him if he'd just learned to keep his mouth shut.

Nightflight whirled around, seething with the utmost fury as she leaned over him. Hiccup immediately dug his nails into the ground, eyes widening as he leaned backwards, trying to make himself look as small as possible. Maybe she wouldn't notice him if he was shrunk into nothing. He felt Ludi curl against tighter against his back, burying her face into his clothes as her ears flattened. He pressed back on her slightly, trying to give her a little comfort, but she didn't respond to his touch. He gritted his teeth together tightly, wincing slightly as he tried to meet Nightflight's scarred eyes.

"What do you think you're doing?" She roared, making Hiccup flinch backwards as though slapped. Hiccup opened his mouth to try and say something, but Nightflight jerked forward, causing the boy to leap back, falling backwards and squashing Ludi down to the ground underneath his back. The cat stirred, trying to wriggle out from underneath Hiccup and take her own stand beside him. Immediately, Hiccup flattened himself down as hard as he could, trying not to squash her in the process. Ludi buckled, pinned against the ground and unable to get herself up underneath his weight. He wouldn't let her come into sight if he could help it, Nightflight knew who took her sight away.

"I tell you that I'm going to kill you, I give you a chance to run, and you FOLLOW ME?" The dragon screeched, wings flying out at her sides, blocking the rest of the moon with it. "Are you- are you MENTAL OR SOMETHING?" Hiccup closed his eyes away from the volume, grimacing as he did so. "You took everything away from me! You have everything in the world that I would want and you're so quick to throw it all away!?" Hiccup relaxed slightly a moment, letting his guard down as his eyes rounded with confusion. Nightflight swept on quickly, though, anger clouding her once-hurt expression. "You don't even deserve to live with what you have! You aren't even sensible enough to cherish it!" She bared her teeth a moment before raising her paw, claws glinting in the harsh light of the moon overhead. She prepared to bring it down on Hiccup's head, and the teen froze, eyes growing to be ten times their normal size. He opened his mouth, stuttering for a moment before he finally got his words out.

"STOP!" He screeched, muscles tensing where he was on the ground.

Nightflight snarled out a reply. "I've waited too long to stop now!" She snapped, venom thick in her words. "No amount of groveling will even-" She broke off abruptly as Hiccup suddenly vanished. The boy had managed to pry himself away from her, on his feet now as he jumped forward, fake leg screaming in protest as he did so. Ludi yowled after him, looking stunned as she pushed herself up clumsily. She stared after Hiccup with wide eyes, waiting for him to turn around and come back for her, and not to leave her here with this dragon. But then she saw the real picture, letting out another, much more wailing cry as her ears flattened to either sides of her head. She sounded so shocked that Nightflight couldn't resist in turning towards where Hiccup had gone, narrowing her eyes as she tried to see more clearly instead of just the blurs she managed to squint at.

Hiccup's heartbeat raced in his eyes as he dashed forward, and he thought that he would be too late at first. His legs wouldn't move as fast as he wanted them to, the nagging doubts in his mind dragging

them behind his mind. But he pushed himself off the ground and closed his eyes. He knew what he was doing, if it didn't seem like he did. The remaining wild dog, which had stayed on the sidelines throughout Hiccup and Nightflight's confrontation. But it had started to charge forward moments ago, this was all Hiccup could do to try and keep Nightflight safe. The thing collided against him, both boy and dog slamming into the ground and rolling back and forth. Hiccup's forehead creased through the pain, trying to throw the thing off of him, but it was too hard to do as the creature's claws rained hard blows down on him. The thing was latched on him, and Hiccup let out a pained cry, regretting his rash decision immensely.

Ludi was squalling where she sat, flailing around as she hopped back and forth. She made forward movements, as though to dash over and help Hiccup, but she held back, knowing the boy would be cross with her if she tried to put herself in any more danger than she already had. Nightflight gasped sharply, a growl ripping through her throat for a heartbeat before bounding forward, raising her claws once more and snapping the dog off of Hiccup, who continued to roll on the ground for a minute or two before crashing into a tree, earning him a muffled yelp of pain. Nightflight gave the dog a more than harsh bite on his shoulder, but that was all she could do before he managed to wriggle away from her, racing back into the forest. She couldn't follow it, she would get lost in a matter of seconds.

Instead, she whipped around to look furiously at Hiccup, who was struggling to his hands and knees shakily, wincing as he did so. The dragon stormed forward, raging by now. "You think this is a game!?" She howled, Hiccup closing his eyes as he crouched on the ground, not even trying to get up anymore. "You think that if you do enough good deeds, I'll suddenly just fall in love with you and forget everything else that happened before now? You STOLE Toothless from me! Me and him were meant to be together, and it would have been perfect if YOU hadn't decided to show up! You ruined my life, and you don't even care about it!" She seemed drained suddenly, hurt showing in every single feature of her face. "He was with me and he cared about me and you ruined it. You ruined everything."

Hiccup raised his head, green eyes meeting her own saddened ones. "I understand now." He wheezed. Blood trickled down from his forehead, clouding his eyesight, and for a moment, Hiccup felt blinded himself. "You and me are more alike than I thought." Nightflight started at this, looking almost offended, but he moved on, giving her no chance to reply. "We've both lost somebody we loved." Nightflight blinked, caught off-guard by the sudden thick of sadness that entered his voice. "But we don't have to do this." Hiccup pressed, Nightflight putting her guard up once more as she scowled. "Toothless isn't somebody to be OWNED, Nightflight. He's my best friend, and I'm sure that if you would have known that from the start, you two would have been the same."

"Don't try to turn this on me, this is all your fault." She snarled.

"Yeah, maybe it is." Hiccup said thinly. "But it's your's too. You wanted to punish me for something I didn't do, and look where we are now. We're stranded on an island in the middle of nowhere." Nightflight did not snap anything back at him, but her frown increased considerably. "Berk is going to be destroyed, we're going to die here, and there's nothing that we can do about it, right?"

Nightflight did not reply, so Hiccup went on. "But we CAN. Nightflight, Berk is a wonderful place. And I'm sure if you just let me-

"Forget it!" Nightflight screeched, Hiccup snapping his mouth closed at the sudden volume. "I'M not becoming a plaything for the humans! My grudge is with you! It always has been! I'll tear off my own wings before I help you at all! You or any of your other humans! They capture dragons and force them to stay with them on the island! They make them into work labors, and pets! The entire ways of the dragon are deprived from them there! And I would rather be caught dead than on that miserable excuse for an island!" Hiccup gritted his teeth as this, and he found anger fueling his words now.

"It's not anything like that! Dragons and humans were meant to live together, I was the one who showed everybody that! Toothless and I showed everybody that dragons can still be dragons without all this war between us! On Berk, dragons HELP humans, and we never demand anything in repay for it! The reward is the closeness that's between a person and their dragon, something so large that nobody could ever take it away from them!" His heart tore at this, thinking of Toothless. Was he thinking about him now? Was he worried? Hiccup looked at Nightflight with new eyes for a moment before adding quietly, "And we're never alone there."

She flinched, as if Hiccup had just slapped her across the face. She growled, and gathered herself, looking ready to tear his head off. But then Ludi finally broke free of herself, racing over and skidding to a stop in front of Hiccup, glaring bravely up at Nightflight. The dragon and the cat met eyes, and Ludi bared her little teeth, bushing her fur out every which way to look much more threatening. Her claws slid out, and she held a challenge in her blue orbs, no matter the way that she was clearly outsized. Hiccup braced himself to knock her to side, clear from any kind of damage. But Nightflight halted, surprisingly, lowering her paw and looked at Ludi like she had just turned into a fruit.

Silence weighed in the clearing for a moment, the only sound was a distant rumble of thunder a ways away. But then Nightflight turned, ducking her head and shutting her eyes softly. When she spoke, she sounded much older, more worn out. "Leave." She sighed, curling her tail tightly around herself and shuffling her paws closer to her stomach. She looked like she was trying to curl into a turtle shell, to hide from everything. When Hiccup didn't move, she repeated the word, a little bit more firmly now. "Leave." She hesitated a moment before mumbling, voice cracking somewhat. "Please."

Hiccup pushed himself up, new wounds stretching painfully against his skin. He picked up Ludi, holding her tightly a moment and leaning down to plant a small kiss on the crown of her little head. He breathed out a small thank-you to her, not loud, but fervent. Ludi purred in reply, still eyeing Nightflight with a warning look. For her attitude, Ludi could have been ten million times bigger than the dragon. Hiccup was about to leave before he turned, looking at Nightflight sadly for a moment. "You'll be alright?" He asked, the words tumbling out of his mouth before he could stop them.

But Nightflight didn't even twitch with anger. "I think I will be." She whispered.

Hiccup hesitated, but then nodded. "And Nightflightâ€¦" He said, pausing a moment as he tried to grope for the words he needed. The dragon turned slowly, green locking with green. The unspoken words in her eyes were enough for Hiccup, and he looked down at himself, at the new bloodstains that were joining the old ones on his clothes. "Don't think you aren't worth it." He said, meeting her eyes again, which rounded slightly with surprise. "â€¦Cause I think you really are a good person underneath. Maybe you just have to let it show a bit more."

Nightflight's mouth hung open, Hiccup decided he was pushing the envelope. Turning, he walked back the way he'd come, feeling much safer than he had a few hours ago. And as he walked back, the first few raindrops began to fall, slowly picking up into a downpour as he got back to their starting point. Rather than finding shelter, he stood on the shore of the beach, eyes sad as he looked across the murky water. "I hope this gets to Berk." He murmured, ducking his head as he spoke. As he said the words, he could almost hear the crackle of flames. See their orange glow flickering behind his eyelids.

"Mistyeyesâ€¦Toothless." He whispered, opening his eyes and looking across the water once more. "I'll be home soon."

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A/N: PLEASE REVIEW! I really liked this chapter, I don't know why. It connected ^^

Tell me what ya think! ^^

28. Chapter 28

A/N: Sorry for the lack of updates! Finalsâ€¦first yearâ€¦.enough said. They start tomorrow, so maybe I wont get this out. Started Tuesday, so I get some credit for that X3

The fanart is done! :D PurpleMistPepper finished it, and it looks amazing! You should all go check it out, it's posted up on my profile :)

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A lot of time could have passed, or a little time could have gone by. It was impossible to tell. All you could know for sure was that when a dragon got in front of you, you had to get it out of the way. You were just aware of the way that your muscles ached and burned with every movement. You were going to fall apart at any time, and yet you knew you had to keep going. If you stopped moving even for a moment, it was all over. You couldn't think about the pain, or the way your throat stung from all the smoke rushing through you. All you could think about was your battle moves, the tactics you had to use to stay alive. If you even skipped a beat of pacing, an enemy could strike from behind you while you weren't paying attention. Or it could lash out at the two dragons you were shielding.

"Get down!" Mistyeyes breathed out rapidly, only pausing to watch Shadowclaw flatten himself to the ground a moment before she pushed forward, soaring over the youngling and smashing into the dragon that

was rushing forward. Leafdapple let out a brave roar where she was, swiping her claws forward threateningly at the Night Fury that was lurking forward, eyes narrowed into slits. Mistyeyes caught sight of it in her scramble, sucking in a sharp breath as she threw herself forward, slamming her opponent down to the ground, pinning him there. Whipping her head backwards, she called out shrilly. "Toothless! Get Leafdapple! Now!"

The dragon perked, having just sent another dragon running. The amount of dragons in the clearing was hard enough to keep track of, keeping Shadowclaw and Leafdapple well-protected was a whole other ordeal. Toothless spun around wildly, stumbling over himself as obvious exhaustion shone in his eyes. Mistyeyes leaned down close to her pinned enemy, snarling in its face for a moment giving it a few good blows, letting him go and watching him retreat back into the throng. She turned, alarm lighting her eyes as she saw Toothless still in his place from before. Another Night Fury was latched onto him, he was unable to go back to Leafdapple's aid. The brown Night Fury was scurrying backwards now, wings flapping wildly at her sides as she leapt away from a swipe of the dragon's claws.

Mistyeyes let out a sharp yelp, wildly looking for Shadowclaw in the mess. Where was he!? Leafdapple was fighting on her own, Shadowclaw was suddenly able to disappear from sight, Toothless taking on two Night Furies now, and Mistyeyes had had to swerve around motionless bodies of both humans and dragons more times than she could count. When was this going to end? And how would it end? There was too much! She was just gonna fall to pieces over what she had gotten herself into, there was no way that she could-

A black blur raced past her, heading straight for Leafdapple, fangs and claws stretched as far as they could go. Mistyeyes snapped out of her haze, horror filling every inch of her as a strangled scream wormed its way out of her throat. "STOP!" She screeched, pelting after the dragon as fast as her weighted-down legs could carry her. "DON'T TOUCH HER!" She made a move to try and trip the Night Fury up, but staggered as the dragon jumped clear over the small female, instead aiming for her harasser. Mistyeyes came to a slow stop, lunging over and grabbing Leafdapple tightly before anything else could happen, drawing her closer with a worried look. The brown female's ears slicked back to her head, but she didn't try to shake off the older one. She merely watched with a terrified look at the two brawling Night Furies in front of her, trembling ever so slightly.

Grappling a moment, the rescuer sent the other running, pushing him off with a pained grunt and roaring as it rushed away. It paused a moment, ear flicking a moment before turning back to look at Mistyeyes and Leafdapple. The elder of the two looked uneasy as she looked at the Night Fury staring over at them, wings pushing forward to shield the smaller. She wasn't sure which side who was on, it was just too confusing. But she would rather be over-cautious than not worried enough. Leafdapple obviously felt the same way, even when she was one of the two to gather up the other Furies together. The newcomer paced forward, more slowly now. Obviously, they realized that it wasn't smart to leap forward.

The dragon narrowed its emerald eyes as it sized up the two, one scared stiff, and the other pained and weary. She came to a stop in front of them, hesitating a moment before dipping her head in

acknowledgement to the two. "Don't give up." She said, her voice silky and smooth, despite the carnage around them. "That the last thing you need to do. Just keep fighting, it will all be over soon." Her eyes were kind, and they were familiar as well. And as she and Mistyeyes locked gazes, the realization slammed into her like a million bricks.

Nearly staggering over herself, Mistyeyes stumbled forward, blue eyes round. "Y-You're Shadowclaw's mother!" She shouted, wings slapping back to her sides. Leafdapple started, uncovered by now. She seemed a little bit more reassured, but still eyed the other dragon carefully, tensed and ready to bolt if needed. But Mistyeyes knew for a fact there was no danger anymore. The dragon's eyes widened, she opened her mouth to say something, but Mistyeyes leapt to her feet, cutting her off. She spun back around to Toothless, blue eyes wide with anxiousness. But the Night Fury seemed more than okay. Shadowclaw had rushed to his aid this time, buzzing around the two other enemies, swiping down and leaving nasty scratches on them when needed.

Toothless panted heavily, watching as the last Night Fury scowled, wings splaying out at his sides as it soared into the sky. Shadowclaw did a neat little twirl in the air, letting out a triumphant squeak as he did so. Toothless did not smile though, reaching up and clamping the dragon down by the tail, pulling him back down to the grass. "Stay still!" He snapped. "What am I supposed to do if they had grabbed you! I can only protect you so much!" The youngling threw him an angered look, sour, as if say: Gee, you're welcome for saving your life! But he didn't say anything, getting caught off-guard as he looked back over to Mistyeyes and the others.

He rushed forward, eyes gleaming with pride in himself and what he had managed to accomplish. "Did you notice! Huh? Did you, did you, did you!?" Mistyeyes blinked down at the smaller dragon, lost and clueless. He went on after a moment, unable to keep still, it looked like. "There's less Night Furies! Or at least, the bad ones! I've taken into account most of what I've seen!" He turned to Leafdapple, the other child seeming to have realized his point faster than Mistyeyes had. "I've seen a lot more Night Furies HELPING us and the humans instead of attacking! The others are thinning out! We're winning!"

Mistyeyes blinked a moment, eyes crumpling slightly with confusion. But as she raised her head and scanned the area around her, she started. Shadowclaw was right. Now that she wasn't so oblivious to what exactly was going on around her, she could see that more than half of what she had thought to be rival Night Furies weren't. Mistyeyes could see some flashing cautious looks over at her, as if warning her that they couldn't hold back the others long enough. Some were going two on one, teaming up together as they charged forward together. And she caught sight of one Night Fury fighting closer to a human. It obviously didn't want to get too close to the human, but Mistyeyes saw that it kept looking out of the corner of its eye, making sure that it wasn't faltering in his blows against its target.

For a moment, Mistyeyes felt numb. She counted the number of Night Furies with bloodlust and anger in their eyes, coming up with a number nearly unbelievable compared to the sheer amount that had first swarmed the village. "But—" She turned back to Toothless,

eyes narrowing slightly as she stared back at him. His ears were permanently glued to his head, and his eyes were sullen and dull as he looked back. But he managed to copy her own expression of puzzlement, a flash going through his eyes as he surveyed the area. "They can't be giving up already, can they?" She asked, voice rising a pitch higher than usual. Shadowclaw and Leafdapple both looked at her like she was an idiot, and maybe she was for asking the question. The 'already' part did not fit there, they had been fighting for what seemed like forever. Even if Mistyeyes closed her eyes, the flickering flames of fire and smoke were etched on the back of her eyelids, and they would stay there long after this whole episode ended. However it ended.

The smoke was too thick to see around, and the newly-formed rain clouds were now hiding the sun. Even if the sun was up by this time. It had to have been, though, they had been at this much too long for only one night. But it seemed as though they were finally getting somewhere, if what Shadowclaw said was true. Her ears perked at the thought, she looked over at Toothless and dared a small little smile over to him. But the Night Fury only held her gaze, not returning her grin and merely staring back at her. Mistyeyes's grin was immediately dashed, and she turned away, looking at the ground silently for a moment before recovering swiftly.

She drew herself up quickly, blue eyes glimmering with a renewed sense of strength that she managed to drag back up. There wasn't a lot of edge to go off of, but she could make do with it. They had gone from unable to rearing and ready, she wasn't about to let this drama stand in her way of protecting Berk. "Right." She said stiffly, refusing to make any sort of eye contact with Toothless as she stared over instead at the new Night Fury sitting across from them. Mistyeyes was slightly caught off-guard at the amount of longing that was in the female's eyes, when she realized with a jolt that her eyes were all for Shadowclaw. The female was looking down at her son as if she wanted to rush forward, her frame tilted slightly, as if she were only able to just stop herself the tiniest bit. Shadowclaw was unaware, eyes narrowed thoughtfully from where he sat behind Toothless, scanning the area quickly, as if he were look-out. And as Mistyeyes looked back and forth, she wondered with a slight twinge of panic and disbelief if Shadowclaw even recognized his mother.

Shadowclaw was oblivious, turning and looking over across the ocean thoughtfully, daydreaming, it looked like. Leafdapple looked shy suddenly, ears slicking back as she looked around, mumbling under her breath, looking as though she was looking for somebody. Toothless was remote now, fully unfocused as he looked silently at the ground, all fire gone from his eyes. And Shadowclaw's mother was so absorbed in her staring, that she wasn't any help. Mistyeyes looked from one dragon to another, slowly gnashing her teeth together tightly. She dug her claws into the ground, and rocketed to her feet, causing every single one to leap backwards, surprised.

"Alright!" Mistyeyes screeched, glaring at each and every one personally, and making a point to do so. Although she skipped over Shadowclaw's mother, fixing the smaller dragon with an even more dangerous stare than the others, in which he immediately flared up at. But he didn't say anything, clamping his mouth shut tight and glaring sourly at her as she went on. "We're doing absolutely NO good right now! Am I the only person to realize this!?" The others were

still silent, so she groaned loudly, going on with a shake of her head. "I don't care what's happened before this! All I care about what's happening AFTER!" Toothless shot her the deadliest look that she'd ever seen him have, and she did her best not to concentrate on it. "We can worry and dream and go to sleep later! And the faster we fight NOW, the sooner we can get this sorted out, the sooner we can relax!"

Nobody said anything, and she took that as an agreement. Whipping around to face Shadowclaw's mother, she jerked her head back to the two younglings. "I'm putting you in charge of them two, alright." She said, obviously not making it a question. "I'm trusting you." She went on, narrowing her eyes. "Take care of them. Don't let any harm come to them." The female paused a moment before sheer anger and determination settled in her purplish orbs. She gave a small nod, and Mistyeyes was satisfied that they would be safe for now. She started as she felt pressure against her leg, and she went stiff as a board, whipping around to expect another Night Fury. But it was only Shadowclaw. The smaller dragon was pressed up against her, eyeing the female in front of them with a look of cautiousness, as if he wasn't sure whether or not he knew her. He'd been on Berk for quite a while after his flight there, and he had been much much smaller when he was with his mother in the tunnels. Somebody would need to talk to him about it. But not Mistyeyes. And not right now.

Instead, she met his eyes and gave him a small smile. He still looked dubious, but as Mistyeyes gave him a small nod, he seemed to relax. "You'll be fine. Toothless and I will be right back for you, okay? We promise." She assured, eyeing the downcast Night Fury as she spoke. Shadowclaw turned to Toothless, looking suddenly much younger. They had been separated before, it should not have to happen again. Toothless locked eyes with Shadowclaw's scared green ones, looking caught off-guard a moment as he tilted his head to the side. And slowly, more feeling came into him as he straightened, narrowing his eyes with a sudden surge of emotion. He gave a small nod, and Mistyeyes breathed out the breath she hadn't realized she had been holding.

Shadowclaw turned, exchanging a glance with Leafdapple before the two turned together, bounding over to stand on the side opposite of Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw. "You two do what she tells you." Mistyeyes said in rush, already backtracking into the crowd. "Be good, don't try to be heroes. This will all be over soon, just try and stick together." Shadowclaw narrowed his eyes at this, while Leafdapple widened her's, looking frightened. The two seemed like polar opposites of the other, one more than ready to take care of himself, the other needing somebody to follow. Mistyeyes just hoped that it wouldn't cause any more issues than it already had.

Mistyeyes turned to Toothless. "I gotta make sure you're with me on this." She said, blue eyes clashing with green. "Please—I know I'm not your favorite person. I know that Hiccup is gone right now. And I know everything is crumbling apart. But please tell me that you're with me on this." Toothless stared back at her, and she pressed forward, voice quieting somewhat. "Or tell me that you're with Berk on this one. Tell me you won't leave just like before. You can't shut Berk out." Her blue eyes were large, and she waited for Toothless to respond with held breath.

He blinked slowly for a moment before turning, looking up into the

cloudy sky. The rain was still relentless, and thunder ripped across the sky, followed shortly after by a painful-sounding crack of lightening. Mistyeyes winced away from it, but Toothless didn't react. "I'll never let Berk down again." He said, voice somewhat thinner than normal. "Noâ€|this time I'm going down with it. I won't leave. Where would I go?"

"We're going to win this, Toothless." Mistyeyes said, voice much stronger than usual. "If we work together, we CAN get through this. Just trust me, alright?" Toothless hesitated a moment, eyeing Mistyeyes almost uncomfortably. Reluctantly, Mistyeyes leaned over, pushing her head against his shoulder for a moment, trying to help him and draw strength from him at the same time. Toothless stiffened for a moment before relaxing slightly, and it was almost a full minute before Mistyeyes pulled back. Her eyes were full of pain, and she shook her head side to side, trying to clear it stubbornly. She told the others to focus, she needed to follow her own advice.

"Alright, Mistyeyes." Toothless said, looking considerably lighter than he had before. "I was serious before, I'm not going to leave Berk as long as I'm alive." He paused a moment before adding, "I just have no idea what I'm going to do when this is all over."

From the corner of her eye, Mistyeyes could see a Night Fury catch sight of her, drawing its teeth back with a feral snarl. She tensed her muscles, claws sliding out of their sheathes. But she did not look away from Toothless. "I know." She said softly. "And I'll help you find out." She promised. Toothless did not have time to reply. The Night Fury leaped forward, just at the same moment Mistyeyes did. The two met in midair, and Mistyeyes braced herself once more to fight all over again.

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The rain was still going strong. It tore through the branches and slammed into the ground, turning it into a sticky, muddy mess. Hiccup's clothes stuck to him uncomfortably, the dampness of the ground going right through him and straight into his bones. He shivered uncontrollably, teeth chattering as he curled his knee up tightly to his stomach as he tried to cling to some kind of warmth. Ludi's fur couldn't fluff out to keep her better insulated, it hung down with the weight of the water. She was shivering as well, eyes wide with fear and desperation as she looked down at Hiccup. The boy closed his eyes tightly, turning away from Ludi as if he were too ashamed to even look at her. She let out a whiny little mew, reaching forward and prodding the curled-up human. But he just tightened away, burying his head into his arms.

Even though the clouds were still a dark gray mass overshadowing over the island, Hiccup knew enough that it was morning. He'd been on Berk for his whole life, which was nearly always either raining or snowing. It was close to noon, maybe a few hours short. Hours were ticking away quicker than he could grab them and bring them back, he felt every single little bit of hope he had slowly melting away like it was water. They couldn't last much longer. It was the plain and simple truth of the matter.

Hiccup was too afraid to keep moving after Nightflight. With the newfound knowledge of the wolves around here, Hiccup had absolutely

no intention of putting Ludi at any more risk than he could help. But maybe those were just excuses. He slowly pushed himself up, wincing as pain shot through his limbs, through every inch of him. He looked down at his good leg, wincing as he tried to move it. It wasn't as damaged as last time he had been in the caves searching for Toothless, this was a different kind of injury. He much have twisted his ankle much worse than he ever had before. He was dizzy, he was tired, he felt sick, he was getting close. He was getting close to that same feeling he had watching the ships sail away with Toothless in tow to the Dragon's Island.

Disappointed in himself, alone, unable, inadequate, desperate, and just sad. He didn't know what to do, he felt himself slowly slipping back into that way of thinking. Back to that choking sense of depression. Even with Ludi here, it just made him feel worse. As if reading his mind, the cat let out a small yelp, jumping out of her skin and scurrying forward, hiding between Hiccup's back and the trunk of the tree they were leaning against. Hiccup barley moved at the noise, though. It had happened periodically these past few long hours. A chortle of barking would start, or a rush of paw steps fleeting by. Followed by a harsh dragon's roar, signaling Nightflight.

Hiccup had no idea what was happening, but it had gotten slowly more and more spaced out. It didn't happen as much now. Whether that was good or not, he had no idea. But he shuffled aside, looking down at Ludi and reaching down, stroking his hand down on her head. He put as much love and admiration he had for her in the movement, and he nearly knocked her over. But the cat's eyes shone as she looked up, and stumbled, righting herself before she could topple over. Hiccup laughed at her reaction, but the grin faded slowly as he looked down at her.

Before she could even move, Hiccup reached down, picking her up and holding her as tightly to his chest as he could possible manage with his wounds. Ludi squirmed a moment, tail lashing back and forth wildly. But Hiccup buried his face into her wet fur, forcing himself to remember every single little thing about her in this moment. "I love you." He choked out. "You know that, right? You know I love you?" Ludi squeaked, still trying to wriggle her way out of the death-hold. Hiccup pushed his arms forward, holding Ludi up under her arms as he looked at her with a sudden sense of intensity. "I NEVER wanted you." He said suddenly, voice subdued. Ludi went limp at this, feet swinging underneath her as she accepted her destiny of never getting away on her own. "I never wanted you, and the first night I had you, I was already thinking of ways to get you out of my life."

He set her down on the ground, Ludi peering up curiously at him, blinking slowly. She was waiting for the 'but', it looked like. Hiccup gave a small laugh under his breath. "I hope you understand that I'll never forgive myself for that." He mumbled, feeling his eyelids start to weigh down on themselves. Ludi gave a yip, watching Hiccup lay back down on the ground, curling up once more. He was nearly covered in mud, but he didn't seem to give a care anymore. Purring, Ludi bounced forward, wriggling underneath Hiccup's arm and curling up into a tight ball. Hiccup drew her closer, closing his eyes and letting himself go limp as he let out a small sigh that breezed through Ludi's once-fluffy fur.

When he opened his eyes again, it was darker than it had been before. Hiccup looked down at Ludi, who was already awake. The small cat's head was erect, ears swiveling back and forth as she listened. He blew out a heavy breath of air, picking himself up with a small grimace. He looked up at the sky, trying to decide what time it was close to being. It was far from noon, that was for sure. He stretched, trying to get as much stiffness as he could out of him, but most of it came from the wounds. He nudged Ludi as he did so, and immediately reached down to right her, but she hadn't moved. She was staring into the trees, looking a little preoccupied with whatever she was thinking about.

Hiccup hummed a note softly to himself, turning his head idly and looking to the left. Through the last ridge of trees that marked the beginning of the island. Through the line of foliage, Hiccup could make out the waves that were sloshing against the shore, churning violently in the storm going on around them. Hiccup turned, coughing into the elbow of his arm, body heaving as he did so. The rain was just going to get worse. It was now or never. Pushing himself up shakily, Hiccup narrowed his eyes at the sea, fists clenching tightly as he leaned against the tree for support.

"Okay, Ludi." He said, swallowing back the lump in his throat. The cat roused slightly at her name, but did not turn back to look at him. "We're going to leaveâ€|right now. We can't stay here anymore. I'm gonnaâ€|we're gonna try to swim back to Berk, okay? We can make it, you just have to hang onto me, and I promise we'll make it back." He started towards the beach as he talked, but as he got a few feet away, he stopped, turning back around. Ludi hadn't moved. She hadn't even turned back to look at him.

"â€|Ludi?" Hiccup asked, starting back over. "Don't you wanna go back to Berk?"

She still didn't turn.

Hiccup stopped a ways away from her, tilting his head to the side as his forehead creased with confusion. "â€|Ludiâ€|?" He asked, voice rasping in his throat as he let out another hacking cough. The island was lit up suddenly, lightening flashing through the sky and shedding light through the darkness that had swamped it before. It was such a drastic change, that Hiccup winced, screwing his eyes shut tightly. A loud snap of thunder shook the world right after the flash of light, and Ludi was up as soon as it happened.

The cat shot to her paws, taking off without a backwards glance. Hiccup staggered with surprise, eyes widening as he reached out after her. "LUDI!" He screamed, voice cracking. Stumbling for a moment, Hiccup rushed after her, forced his exhausted state as fast as it could go. Rushing after her, Hiccup ignored the branches that slapped him as he went by, ignoring the intensified pain in his shoulder as he scraped it past trees and boulders. Ludi was a small little streak in the mass of ferns and undergrowth, if he even blinked he would lose sight of her. "LUDI, SLOW DOWN! COME BACK!" He shouted, not caring if he attracted any kind of animal at all. The only animal he was afraid of was the one running from him. He was afraid he would lose her.

Please, Thor, haven't enough things happened to me like this?

Ludi suddenly veered a sharp right, leaping forward with paws stuck straight out behind her. Her wet tail vanished around the corner, and Hiccup's heart leapt into his throat. But suddenly, he heard something else, and he came to an abrupt halt, tripping himself up and slamming into the muddy ground with a huff. Rubbing his head wearily, Hiccup shuffled, pushing himself slowly so that he could peer around the corner. And what he saw shouldn't have surprised him. It didn't, really. Instead of fear coming over him, he sighed, face calm and passive. He should have known better.

Nightflight was pacing back and forth in a long line, head raised to the sky and sniffing every so often. Her blind eyes roved the landscape thoughtfully, as if she could see every little detail. Her tail lashed back and forth, and she snorted every so often, as if a warning. Hiccup's forehead wrinkled at the odd behavior, but got cut off as he saw that she was getting way too close to him. She seemed to not be aware of him—again. He didn't know whether he should try and fix that somehow. But she was nearly two inches away from him, and it looked as though Hiccup was wrong, and she really did know he was there already. His heart hammered, and he flattened himself down to the ground as best he could.

But at the last moment, Nightflight swung around, walking back the way she had come. She was pacing still. Hiccup looked down at the muddy ground, seeming lost. He had no idea what he was supposed to do now. He had to find Ludi, but Nightflight was in his way. He blew out a huff of air, bangs fluttering upwards as he did so. With the amount of frustration that was inside of him, he felt like if he stared at wood long enough, it would spontaneously combust.

But suddenly, Ludi's head came into view. Only her head. The cat stuck her head out of the bush that was closest to Hiccup, eyes shining in the darkness of the island. They were like moons, that and the faint outline of her form was the only thing that Hiccup could really see. His heart lifted at once, and he made a move to get her before she could run away again, when the cat jumped. She didn't jump anywhere, just up. But it set the bush rustling back and forth wildly, Hiccup's eyes widening at once, heart freezing over. Ludi flicked her ears, turning calmly over to peer through the branches at Nightflight.

The dragon immediately stiffened, whirling around and roaring as loud as she could at the bush., as if warning it. Hiccup made a move towards Nightflight. He had to protect Ludi! But the cat immediately glowered over at him. He'd never seen her so angry before. The glare locked him into place. He couldn't move under her stare. Raising her paw again, Ludi stared at him a moment. The boy shook his head quickly, eyes starting to sting as he saw Nightflight get closer and closer to the bush, investigating it. But Ludi smacked her paw down on the ground again, setting the bush swaying back and forth once more.

"Ludi, get out of there!" Hiccup hissed, voice grating against his throat painfully. But it was too late. Ludi shut her eyes tightly, bracing herself, it looked like. Nightflight rushed forward, roaring loudly as she extended her claws for the bush. Hiccup shot up to his feet, head spinning from the quick movement. "STOP!" He screamed, trying to vain to get Ludi out before anything could happen to her. But the cat turned, leaping out of the bush on her own accord. But the wrong way. She was going towards Nightflight. The cat was

suicidal!

She let out a squeal, eyes narrowed as she skidded to a stop. For all her might, she could have been twice Nightflight's size. Her eyes flashed dangerously, and Hiccup could have sworn something close to a smirk crossed her face. Hiccup covered his eyes tightly, eyes starting to blur as he felt his knees start to give out. He tried to remember everything he could about Ludi in that small little millisecond. The way her nose wrinkled when something she didn't like happened, the way she seemed to know everything better than anybody, the way she curled up close to him at night, the way that she used to look at him with confusion every time that Hiccup looked at his pictures of Toothless sadly. The way she caused Hiccup to know the way to help Toothless. She knew everythingâ€|she knewâ€|

Hiccup stiffened, dropping his arms like they were weights as he looked over at the runt. Ludi had drawn herself up, ears flattened against her head bravely as Nightflight charged, letting out a sharp, loud, chirp. She seemed to know what happened next better than Hiccup did. Nightflight stopped. She skidded against the snow, ramming to a halt just steps away from Ludi. The cat and the dragon clashed gazes, and the only way that Hiccup remotely knew that Ludi was afraid was from small twitches of her tail every now and then. The dragon bared her teeth, but stayed where she was.

She didn't even raise a claw on the cat.

And slowly, Hiccup realized what Ludi was trying to do.

She was trying to make a point.

It all clicked together. The way that Nightflight's roar sounded right after the barkingâ€|the way that she had stopped right before she came into contact with Ludi. The way she roared at the bush first instead of just charging. Hiccup's expression changed, he came out of his hiding spot, raising his hand and pointing over to Nightflight almost accusingly. A strange smile came over his face, almost like a smirk, just like Ludi. It all made sense. "You." He said, Nightflight immediately turning to face him at the sound of his voice. She growled under her breath, but did not move. Did not strike. She didn't insult him, or call him a twig yet. That was when Hiccup knew for absolute certain that Ludi had been right. "You were protecting us." He said, amusement lingering on the edge of his tone. Nightflight stiffened, but did not object. Hiccup let out a nervous laugh, shoulders loosening as he let his hand drop once more. "You were protecting us and making sure that the wolves wouldn't come after us!" He said in a rush.

Nightflight's ear twitched. "Of course not." She sniffed, turning away pointedly. "I have no idea what you're talking about." But she still did not insult him. Hiccup's eyes went down to Ludi, and the cat stared back, wrapping her tail neatly around her paws. She looked quite smug. Hiccup's eyes grew soft, and he felt his chest almost expand from the feeling that blossomed inside. He silently mouthed down to her, "Thank you." The cat purred, going over and brushing against his ankles lightly. She eyed Nightflight as she did so, almost saying: "I'm letting you off right now. Make one move, and you'll wake up into next Tuesday."

Hiccup smiled down at her, but started, catching Nightflight. The

dragon was looking towards the two, a small frown pulling at the edges of her mouth. She looked sad. So sad that Hiccup was almost caught off-guard. He looked at the ground a moment, staring at Ludi carefully before he spoke, not looking up. "You're getting really good at that." He said finally. Nightflight blinked, looking at him oddly. He went on, shrugging his good shoulder, wincing at the movement. "Making faces. Most dragons on Berk can do that, but Toothless was the one to teach them." He rubbed the back of his head. "I guess he taught you pretty well." He added awkwardly.

"Who taught you to be so annoying?" Nightflight asked scathingly. "You got real good at that." Hiccup closed his eyes, smiling as he let out a sigh. There she was. But he knew that the longer he was here, the shorter his leash got. He was pushed it. He turned, ready to leave, but Nightflight spoke up, much much softer this time. "How did you do it?" She asked softly. Hiccup blinked, turning back to her, tightening his hold on Ludi. Nightflight turned to look behind her, stretching her wings out until they were full span. Her right wing was nearly prodding Hiccup in the chest, and yet he did not move, merely waiting. "How did you help Toothless fly without a tail?" She murmured.

"I made the other half." Hiccup said, knowing obviously that that wasn't the answer she was looking for. He paused a moment before going on, leaning over and placing Ludi back on the ground. "I knew that I had to help him. Just like he came to know that he needed me just as much as I needed him. Maybe it took a while. It took a lot of tries." He shrugged for the second time. Nightflight still did not look satisfied at all. She ducked her head, closing her eyes as she shrunk her wings back to her sides. And it was only then did Hiccup start pacing forward.

"I was alone." He said finally, rousing her attention once more. "Everybody hated me. My own father did, actually. No joke." He stopped a few inches from her, clasping his hands behind his back. She hadn't reacted to her shrinking of space, but he wasn't about to push the envelope. "No friendsâ€¦no acquaintances, even. â€¦You could count the guy I worked with, but he would never be as close to me as I would have wanted somebody to be. And I thought that was my fate, my only road. To be alone and sad and miserable. I'd almost come to terms with it." Ludi shuffled her paws where she sat, looking downcast. "And thenâ€¦Toothless came into my life." Hiccup said, voice cracking somewhat. "He showed me that there's so much MORE to life. And to me. He showed me everything that Iâ€¦was blind to. And because of that, I'm a whole different person now."

Nightflight turned, looking at him through her blurry eyes. Hiccup took one step closer. "And now I know who I amâ€¦what my purpose is. And it's not just to be ignoredâ€¦to be tossed aside. There's so much more to me. And there's so much more to YOU. And if you just let meâ€¦I can show you what you're missing. I can be the one to shed light on the subject." Biting his lower lip, Hiccup reached over slowly, holding out his hand for her, palm facing her. Immediately, she stiffened, backtracking slightly with alarm in her eyes.

"It's okay." Hiccup whispered, eyes shining as he took yet another small step forward. "It's okay."

Nightflight straightened, looking at him for a long moment, looking pained.

"Nothing will ever hurt you again." Hiccup said slowly, arm at full extent by now. "I promise."

Nightflight jerked forward slightly, as if some part of her was being held backwards. Ludi braced herself, eyes narrowing with both suspense and warning. She was on full-alert, eyes trained on both Hiccup and Nightflight at the same time. She looked unsure on what was going to happen, frazzled. But Hiccup knew what he was doing a hundred percent. There was no going back now. Nightflight was getting closer and closer, uncertain eyes trained on Hiccup intently, as if worried he might stab her as soon as she made contact.

Hiccup ducked his head, lowering down so that he was kneeling on the ground. His hand was still up, he looked up at Nightflight, looking through his wet bangs. "Please let me show you." He said clearly. Nightflight swallowed a lump in her throat, closing her eyes tightly. Painful memories seemed to fill up her sightless eyes, thoughts moving like fish through her orbs. And yet she leaned forward, pressing her snout against Hiccup's hand softly, and gently. Ludi loosened at this, eyes glimmering in the darkness. Hiccup breathed out at once, loosening as he looked up, giving Nightflight a large smile.

Nightflight drew backwards after a moment, looking fazed. As if she didn't know what she had just done. The two stared at one another for a moment, silence reigning through the perimeter of the island. The only thing that existed was them, it seemed.

And overhead, it stopped raining.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **I've heard it saidâ€|.that people come into our lives for a reason.**

Bringing something we must learn and we are lead to those

Who help us most to grow, if we let them. And we help them in return.

Well, I don't know if I believe that's trueâ€|

But I know I'm who I am todayâ€|becauseâ€|I knew youâ€|

For Good- Wicked.

I hope you liked :)

I was going to make this longer, but decided against it at the last moment. It would have been too long, and I felt like this the was the best ending I could come up with. Soâ€|it's Thursday! XDD Two daysâ€|this is the product. Sorry if the beginning is confusing, I was confused writing it. TOO MANY DARN DRAGONS!

Please review! Finals sucked and the last day of it is tomorrow! And I have this whole new drama both on the internet and real life. So I need some kick-butt reviews to get me in the spirit of things! Christmas is coming! What do you all want! :D

I AM CONVERTING SOMEBODY! My boyfriend of a few months nowâ€¦a few months ago, I realized that he had never seen HTTYD before.

That is a problem. O-o

29. Chapter 29

Her head felt like it was miles away from her body, resting on a cloud with the way that it spun lazily. Slowly, Astrid grimaced, pushing herself up gingerly and setting herself upright. She was lying down beside a tree, and immediately, she leaned back against it for support. It took a moment for her dizzy spell to subside, but as soon as it did, she stiffened, eyes widening with alarm as she looked around quicker than she should have. It caused her head to spin all over again, and she grunted, one hand going up to hold the side of her temple gingerly. She realized that it was raining, her clothes weighted down with the disgusting combination of mud and water. She made a face, planting her hands down on either side of her in the squishy ground. But right when she was about to try and boost herself up, a voice piped up from beside her.

"You might want to slow down before racing around." The comment was dry and sarcastic, Astrid immediately knowing who it was on the spot. She turned, biting her lower lip at the Elder, who was bent over a small child, who was sniffing on the ground. "You got a nasty claw scratch on your side. I did the best I could with it, but those blasted dragons burned down my whole stock of herbs." The last words were spat out angrily, the Elder's eyes narrowing as she said them. The child leaned away from her, fright gleaming in its eyes. The Elder looked to be inspecting a scrape on the palm of the little boy's hand. After a moment, she straightened, giving a nod of affirmation. "It'll be fine. Too small to get infected."

"But it hurts!" The boy wailed, tears beading on the edges of his eyes.

His mother rushed up from behind, looking frazzled as she reached down, scooping him up in her arms and holding him tightly to her chest. She shushed him fervently, looking back over her shoulder frantically. "Let's go back to the others, sweetie." She said, the child's sobs turning into small little hiccups. "We have to be quiet, little one. Don't you want to be safe?" The Elder shooed them back, the two disappearing behind a screen of lichen. Astrid blinked, craning her neck to the side with confusion as she could hear other muffled talking from behind the screen.

"What's going on?" She asked when the Elder finally turned back to her. She turned, spotting her axe a few feet away from her, looking to have been thrown aside on the ground. She bit back her defiant snap at the thought of the poor treatment, reaching over with a pained look and taking hold of the handle, dragging it back so that it was closer to her. She kept her grip on it tightly, just in case. With her waking up somewhere in the forest, with a bunch of people around her hiding, she had no idea what to think. The Elder seemed to have anticipated the question, though.

"We're towards the center of Berk." She said, nodding back to the place where the others were screened behind the ferns and undergrowth. "The people that had to take refuge, who were too old to fight

against the dragons, or who had to take care of others. I'm a little bit of both, I guess you could say." Astrid did not laugh at the joke, the situation rushing back to her as she narrowed her eyes slowly, hands balling into fists. The Elder went on, though, not paying attention to the teen's reaction. "The dragons spotted us all, flew us far enough away so that the fire wouldn't catch up to us for a while." She hesitated a moment, eyeing the storm booming around them. "But I suppose the fire must have been dashed away by now. This storm has been going on for a while."

Astrid remembered the last few minutes that she had been conscious, jaw locking backwards. "Where's Mistyeyes?" She asked, looking back over the way that she had come. Or at least she thought she had come from. She remembered the Night Fury picking her up and flying her back here, she was out of it from the loss of blood. Riding a Night Fury was different from riding a Nadder, it seemed. It was smoother, much more controlled. Night Furies were considered the most dangerous dragons out there that they knew of, after all. And now there were millions swarming the island.

"Back to the fight, I'd suppose." The Elder sighed tiredly. Astrid glanced over at her, blinking. There was a certain longing hidden in her voice when she said the words, and her eyes shone with a strange light. She wanted to be out there, knowing what was happening. Well, so did Astrid. The girl pushed herself up to her feet, standing up straight. A dull pain was sparking in her side where the claw marks were etched into her skin, but she pushed it away. It was tolerable, she could live with it. The Elder eyed her, but did not object her moving. It would be a losing battle, and she seemed to be aware of that fact.

"Well then I should go back too." Astrid said firmly, grunting slightly as she hoisted her axe behind her, resting it on her shoulder neatly. Having her axe with her sent a rush of comfort through her, and it almost made her forget about her injury. There had to be people out there worse off than she was right now, she could put on a brave face and get through it easily. She was about to call out for Stormfly, but hesitated at the last moment, turning around to face the Elder with a small wince. "How long was I out?" She asked. There might not even be a village to get back to.

But the old woman brushed it off quickly. "Not long enough, in my opinion. The gray dragon has been back a few times, bringing me more wounded people. They're all moved behind the screen, I have to get to them if you're going to leave. I would have pulled you back there as well, I just didn't know whether it would reopen your wound." She eyed the girl for a moment, grouchy. "I suppose my worrying was for nothing, then." The words were slightly sour than her others, but Astrid wasn't listening.

She wrung her hands together nervously a moment, a trait that not too many saw for the girl. She was hardly ever nervous, and when she was, the others knew not to touch her. She had a mixed look of fury and anxiousness usually, as if she couldn't believe that she was feeling like this. But this time, she looked at the Elder with a sad sort of look, and the Elder had only seen that look two other times. Both having to do with the same person. So when Astrid opened her mouth, the Elder was more than sure of the oncoming question. "And where's Hiccup?" She prompted.

The Elder shrugged, trying to look unimpressed. "Out in the fight, probably." She said, turning back over to the screen of lichen. "You'd best be getting back there." She added, pacing back to where her other patients were probably writhing in pain. Astrid frowned a moment, wondering why she had changed her judgment so fast. But the Elder vanished behind the foliage, and Astrid knew that no matter what she called out for, she wouldn't reappear.

The frown stayed on her face, but she turned quickly, jogging forward until the makeshift Elder's hut was far behind her. She did not want to go back. Skidding to a stop, Astrid cupped her hands over her mouth, sucking in a deep breath before yelling out as loud as she could for her dragon. She hoped that she would be able to hear her like Toothless could hear Hiccup's cries for help. Or used to be able to, Astrid revised quickly. "STORMFLY!" She hollered, voice cracking at the sudden increase of volume for her. She repeated the calls for a moment before letting her hands swing down to her sides with a smack.

She waited a minute—two minutes. Three. Astrid was beginning to wonder, with a sudden nauseated feeling, whether her dragon was even alive still, with all the fighting going on with Berk. But there was a sudden whooshing noise of wings through the air, and Stormfly landed neatly beside her, chirping loudly in greeting to her human. Astrid grinned, letting out her breath she hadn't realized she had been holding. Darting forward, she paused a moment to nuzzle her dragon fondly, before turning and hoisting herself up onto the dragon's back with a grunt. Her side tingled with pain at the sharp movement, but Astrid shoved it aside.

"Let's go back to the village, Stormfly." Astrid said breathlessly. "We gotta go back and help the others." The Nadder jerked with surprise, turning back to look in the direction that the girl had come from, looking a little torn somehow. Astrid's eyes hardened, and she repeated her instructions, more forcefully this time. "Come on, Stormfly! We HAVE to help the others! And we have to find Hiccup!" The desperation must have finally reached the Nadder, she jerked, as if being roused from a thought she was mulling over. Turning wildly, the dragon arched her wings a moment before shooting off into the sky, shooting as fast as a rocket towards the island.

Astrid narrowed her eyes against the wind and rain, having to cling tightly to her dragon in order to stay upright. The higher they got into the sky, the more the rain felt like little needles piercing her skin, but she paid no heed to the fact. She looked down into the island, surveying the land as Stormfly neared the village. It seemed almost the same as she had left it. The girl tried to hold back her wail of anguish that bubbled up in her throat. She thought at least that they would have gained more ground than it seemed they did, she had been out for a while. The number of dragons had increased, but not by much. And while she could see some Night Furies fleeing from the island, the number was still higher than she liked. The hopeful part of her mind had pictured the island nearly empty by now, almost all the Night Furies giving up and retreating. But it seemed like only half of them followed her wishes.

Swallowing back a lump in her throat, Astrid clung to her axe tightly, as if reassuring herself. "Alright, down, girl." She said softly, the dragon letting out a low cooing noise in reply. Swooping down, Stormfly angled herself down towards the ground, landing with a

small plopping noise as mud squelched over and between her claws. Astrid turned, sliding off the dragon's back and staggering to an uneven halt, panting as she gritted her teeth against the sharp slice in her side. That dragon did a number on her. She tried to shake it off, adjusting her grip on her axe as she started back from the edge of the island towards where most of the fighting was taking place.

Stormfly let out a harsh yelp, making Astrid stop in her tracks, turning around and looking back to her dragon. The Nadder looked both ways a moment, still looking unsure. But she trotted after her human, leaning down and nuzzling the side of her face. She wasn't about to be left behind. A rush of affection swamped through Astrid, and she grinned, holding tight to her Nadder for a moment before turning with a small nod. "You ready, girl?" She asked. The Nadder huffed out a reply, giving a tense nod of her head in response to her. Astrid's sharp eyes immediately located a Night Fury, its head raised as it looked over the crowd carefully, eyes narrowed as it did so. Raising her axe, she let out a loud Viking War Cry, picking her feet up and rushing at the dragon with all she had.

The Night Fury stiffened at the yell, turning around and starting with surprise at the sight of her. Its eyes flew open with surprise, and it seemed shocked all around. Like it didn't know what to do. Stormfly flanked her side, wings splayed out threateningly as she let out a loud roar. The Night Fury didn't even raise a claw for itself, didn't even try to run. And only when she was a few feet away from it did Astrid really start to wonder why that was. But right as she was about to swing her axe down on the creature, something big clutched at the back collar of her shirt, yanking her backwards in the nick of time.

She gasped, feet flying out from underneath her as she was pulled backwards. Stormfly skidded to a halt, eyes wide as she turned to look back at Astrid with a mix of fear and confusion. The Night Fury took its chance, spinning around and vanishing in less than a moment. Astrid flailed for a moment, trying to dislodge herself, when she was suddenly put down on the ground, feet sinking back into the mud. Turning around, the girl sucked in a deep breath, ready to start screaming at the person who stopped her from taking out one of the enemies. But she snapped her mouth closed at the sight of Stoick, all anger rushing out of her to be replaced by confusion.

"What was that for!?" She demanded, forgetting to hold her tongue in the heat of the situation.

"Where have you been?" He demanded, looking unusually cross with her. Astrid fought to scream out loud. A million Night Furies were around her, and the CHIEF of the island that was getting DESTROYED was stopping her from fighting! At her disgusted look, Stoick went on, narrowing his eyes down at her with sudden intensity. "Most of the Night Furies here are helping us." He said, the words making Astrid's jaw go slack. The girl looked around, noticing for the first time that most of the battles around her were Night Fury against Night Fury. Which was which, she had no idea. But most of the pitch-black dragons weren't trying to attack either her or Stoick where they stood, not even glancing temptingly in their direction. They were focused on attacking other Night Furies.

"How?" She could only manage that one word. Stormfly crooned

worriedly where she sat.

"I have no idea." The chief said, voice entirely flat by now. He looked around the clearing a moment, his voice changing from empty to grateful. "I just know that whatever these dragons are thinking for, they've saved our village. I just hope they won't turn on us as soon as the other Night Furies are taken care of." Astrid eyed him as he spoke, seeing a flash of frustration in his eyes. He still doesn't know how to deal with dragons, still, Astrid realized. They all seemed to be changing trends in front of his eyes. Good like Toothless, then Bad like Nightflight, and now back to Good. It seemed to be taking a toll on the chief, and now he had no idea if he should fight the ones fighting for them now, just so they won't change as well. And Astrid couldn't help but privately agree with him.

"Maybe Hiccup has something to do with this." Stoick mumbled, as if trying to persuade himself.

"So you haven't seen him?" Astrid asked, closing her eyes.

Stoick turned back over to her, eyes widening a fraction. He seemed to be counting a million possible situations that could have originated from those five words. Astrid ducked her head a moment, turning stiffly and tightening her hold on the weapon yet again. "I'd better go find him then." She said thickly, refusing to think the same way as Stoick. He was fine, he was just around here somewhere. More determined than before, Astrid turned, jerking her head to Stormfly before rushing back through the crowd, eyes straining for a sight of Hiccup.

"Go carefully!" Stoick called after her, no doubt telling her to watch who she was fighting.

The girl didn't show any signs she had heard, and yet reminded herself to remember that later. For now, though, if Stoick was right and there wasn't as much threat to it, she was going to put everything into finding Hiccup. The boy usually stuck out like a sore thumb, with the way he was so different from any other Viking. But with the way the clearing was packed with dragons, Astrid doubted that it would make a difference. She would try to find Toothless and Mistyeyes first, he would be with them, no doubt. Mistyeyes and Toothless could be spotted easily, right?

"Alright, Girl." Astrid said, turning and stroking Stormfly's snout lovingly. "We gotta find Toothless and Mistyeyes, okay? Can you get me to them?" The Nadder let out a small sneeze, which Astrid took as a yes. Climbing back onto the Nadder, Stormfly lifted into the air with ease, gaining altitude until they were hovering over the island, peering down onto Berk with narrowed eyes. Astrid blinked, thoughtfulness creasing her face as she reached for a glimpse of Mistyeyes's pale scales. She would stand out more than Toothless would, she bet.

"Stormfly, do a lap." She instructed, the dragon immediately pulling forward through the air. The Nadder started to round the island, looking for the two dragons just as much as her human was. Now that Astrid knew what to look for, the girl could see that the number of fighting Night Furies were decreasing altogether. She saw more and more dragons almost copying her, prowling the length of the island and making sure that the targets were preoccupied. She could see that

more and more dragons were starting to withdrawal. Whether they were enemy Night Furies, or just the ones that suddenly decided to help, they were all starting to leave. While some fled in panic and urgency (most likely the enemy dragons), some Night Furies were leaving in groups, heading in the same direction. The island was thinning. And Astrid hoped that this would all be over soon.

She voiced her thoughts to her dragon, patting the female's side as she spoke. "It'll all be over soon, it looks like, girl." She said encouragingly. The Nadder trilled in reply, head shaking back and forth with pleasure. She let her shoulders sag out of their tense state, letting out a slow breath as she tried to get herself to calm down. Everything would be fine. She would land on the island and Hiccup would be sitting on the ground. He'd look up at her as she came forward and grin that stupid grin that he always gave her and ask her, "Well, where have YOU been!?" And she'd just smile.

But she closed her eyes as she remembered the last time they'd seen each other. Guilt and shame filled her to the brim, and her hands clutched across her stomach, as if holding herself together. She had seen the way Hiccup was so not himself. And yet she just pushed him away because of a fight that didn't even really make sense. She'd let him run off by himself when she knew the danger they were about to be thrown into. And she could have let him run to his own death. Without even trying to follow him, without even trying to stop him to get some actual sense from him.

The way he'd looked at her pleading for help

She'd refused him

Stormfly sliced through her thoughts, letting out a squeal. Astrid opened her eyes, blinking rapidly as she followed Stormfly's eyes. A smile lit up her once-saddened face, and the girl felt a wave of relief at the sight of Mistyeyes and Toothless. The two had just raked nasty claws down a Night Fury's eye, it had been no match for the two of them together. The Night Fury spun around, shooting into the sky and retreating from the island with squeals of pain and shock. It nearly ran straight into Astrid, but Stormfly swerved at the last moment, nearly jostling the girl off from her perch. The girl clung tighter, righting herself she straightened, patting Stormfly once to make it clear she was alright. The Nadder swooped down to the island and landed behind Mistyeyes and Toothless, the dragons turning at the sound of the landing.

Astrid half-slid, half-stumbled off of her dragon, rushing forward to the pair with a grin on her face. Mistyeyes returned the smile, and Toothless did the same after a beat of hesitation. Still grinning, Astrid looked around the two expectantly, waiting for Hiccup to step around them with an annoyed look on his face. But nobody appeared. The girl's expression melted from a grin to something close to a disappointed grimace. Mistyeyes caught the look, ears flattening to the sides of her head as she tilted her head to the side, concern showing in her eyes.

It was only then that Astrid realized what Mistyeyes feared. "I'm alright." She said, giving the gray Night Fury a smile once more. She touched her side, stifling a wince from the movement. "It's just a scratch, no big deal. I've been in worse situations." Toothless

flicked his tail at this, and Astrid ducked her head a moment, increasing pressure a little on her wound. "So I guess that we're going to win this, now?" She asked, not expecting an answer from either of them. Toothless remained still, there was something very off about him, Astrid realized. He wasn't angry but not happy either. Was he sad? He looked like a child who got stranded from their mother in an unfamiliar place, lost and confused. But Mistyeyes got in front of the downcast dragon, beaming suddenly in response.

She seemed to have high hopes.

Astrid turned to look across the island. It seemed so. More and more Night Furies were stopping in their fighting. The island was thinning before their eyes. And so was the rain. As the downpour slowly receded into a drizzle, Astrid could see the way that the faces of the Vikings were changing. From hopeful to outright triumphant. And the girl let a smile cross her face once again. "I guess I missed out on some of it." She said with dry humor. Mistyeyes flicked her tail in response. "Stoick said that the only real reason we won was because of the Night Furies that had a change of heart." She said, turning to look back at the two, who exchanged glances at this. "He said it probably had something to do with Hiccup."

Neither of the two moved. Astrid blinked rapidly a moment, straightening. "It WAS him, right? It couldn't have been anybody else!" She blustered, a sudden sense of urgency entering her tone. Still no answer. They were dragons, of course there would be no answer. And yet she pressed again, stepping closer this time. "Where's Hiccup?" She asked flatly.

Still nothing.

"Tell me!" She yelled suddenly, both dragons leaping backwards in surprise.

Mistyeyes curled her tail closer over herself, closing her eyes and looking away. Toothless just stared steadily back at her, not moving at all. The two locked eyes a moment, and Astrid's eyes burned. Whether it was from anger, or tears, she wasn't sure at all. Her hands balled into fists, and she felt herself start to tremble. Hiccup's voice rang in her ears, teasing back then. "Third time's the charm!" He had sung. No. Please, Odin, PLEASE no. When was it all going to stop!?

Suddenly, Toothless's eyes dilated, a growl ripping through his throat. Astrid screamed, stumbling backwards, and tripping as she did so. She tumbled, falling into the mud on her back. Her mind flashed back to the time that he had attacked Hiccup, and she found herself foolishly bracing herself for impact. But Toothless leaped clear over her, claws extended as he let out a shrill scream. Mistyeyes followed him, eyes slowly rounding with horror as she streaked after him. A blast of purple light exploded from behind her, and Astrid shot bolt upright, blue eyes wide and scared as she turned to look back at them.

Toothless had skidded to a stop, shooting another fireball at the now-fleeing Night Fury. Astrid thought that it was going home, until the dragon swerved at the last moment. The fireball shot around it, the dragon was unscathed. And after a moment, it disappeared

completely. Astrid was panting as she pushed herself up, still not seeing what made Toothless change so radically. But then she saw the real picture. Her eyes widened, her legs turned to jelly. She started shaking so much it looked like she was having a seizure, and she knew that if she tried to walk forward, her legs would refuse to work. She'd just crumple into the ground.

Stormfly had been attacked. Blood gushed freely from a deep wound on her chest, and Astrid let out a strangled scream, more or less falling forward. She rushed forward, dropping like a stone beside her friend, tears already streaming down her face as she looked down at her with horror. Stormfly's wings were tattered, ripped beyond repair, it looked like. Wounds littered her scales, and Astrid choked back a sob. The Night Fury must have went all-out. It had known it had precious seconds. Her dragon whined lowly, twitching with pain and discomfort. Her eyes locked with Astrid's, and the girl reaching up, rubbing her eyes roughly with her wrist.

"Y-You're going to be fine!" Astrid sobbed, trying to get her voice under control. "Stormflyâ€¦you'll be fine! Just-Just let me try and stop the bleeding here. Stay still, don't move!" She twisted to the side, trying to spot some kind of moss underneath all the mud and gunk on the ground. The dragon made a move to get up at her movement, trying to follow her with her task. Trying to help her. Astrid immediately sniffled, pushing her back down gently. "I said don't MOVE!" She yelled, the words coming out sharper than she meant them to. The dragon whined, letting her head fall slack against the ground.

Toothless was heaving for air, eyes wide. "Stormflyâ€¦!" He managed, voice choking as he looked down at his friend, who was writhing in pain on the ground. "I-I was too slowâ€¦I saw him pin you downâ€¦I- I just couldn't-"

Mistyeyes was up already. She spun around, glaring sharply at Toothless. "I need moss." She said sternly, Toothless looking up at her, fully alert for once, it looked like. "Fly to the highest point of Berk and find whatever you can. We're going to stop the bleeding. Cobwebs would be good too, but they'll probably be too wet to work with, or completely gone from the storm. We need to help her until the Elder gets here, and even she will probably not know as much of what to do." When Toothless didn't move, she pressed again. "HURRY!"

The dragon made a move to turn, when suddenly, a Night Fury streaked through the air, retreating from the island. A strange quietness filled the space, and every single one of them looked in the center. Stoick stood there, surveying the land a moment or two, at the dragons that were still left. It was entirely barren of any more enemy Night Furies. "â€¦We've done it." Stoick murmured softly. After a moment, he raised his voice to yell. "WE'VE DRIVEN OUT THE NIGHT FURIES! WE'VE DONE IT!"

Cheers erupted from the crowd, as loud as the thunder that had been there a moment before. Astrid winced away from the noise, leaning down and sobbing into her dragon's chest. Mistyeyes was crouched over the dragon down, applying pressure in parts that needed it, and murmuring out soft encouragements. Slowly, she raised her head to look over at Toothless, her praises to Stormfly drifting off until she was completely silent. They stared at one another for a moment,

but Mistyeyes broke the silence finally.

"We've won." She said quietly.

Slowly, Toothless looked down at Stormfly, still wriggling, trying to get to Astrid even in her severely wounded state. "â€|Have we?" He asked in a whisper.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: MERRY CHRISTMAS!

â€|.AGAIN

30. Chapter 30

A/N: Sorry for the lack of updates! The Holidays got to me XP

Wanna know how much of a nerd I am? I'm in high school. I got HTTYD bed sheets, comforter, curtains, and a pillowcase for Christmas. Did not even hesitate before throwing it in the wash. I watched the washing machine and dryer, changing them the moment it ran out of its time, and put them on my bed at once. That, and my boyfriend got me a 50 dollar gift card to Build a Bear Workshop. I got a teddy bear on my HTTYD bed that smells like cotton candy. My room could not have any more swag than it does right now XDD -shot-

Every night you cry yourself to sleep

Thinking: "Why does this happen to me?"

Why does every moment have to be so hardâ€|?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The island was dark, barren. It was silent and cold. It was nothing like the island that Hiccup had grown used to, had grown up in and lived throughout his whole life. The familiarity and the warmth of Berk had vanished. It had vanished, and Hiccup had no idea where it had gone. He got down from Nightflight, slipping off the dragon's back and landing with a muffled stomp on the ground. His eyes were wide and stricken as he looked around him. Smoke was billowing up into the sky, a reminder of the fire that had ravaged the village before. The outer shell of houses were beginning to crumble off, snapping off and smashing into the ground with a loud thud that sliced through the silence. Hiccup winced away from the noise, Ludi flattened herself down to the ground, cowering behind Nightflight's leg, who she had feared most before now. She must have forgotten her fear for the dragon in this recent moment.

It was like a ghost town.

Hiccup felt his heart rip in half, the pain so intense that he was sure he was going to fall down to the ground and die. He felt like he would have rather have that. Shaking and trembling where he stood, Hiccup cupped his hands over his mouth, screaming out loudly, voice desperate. "ASTRID!" He screamed, breaths getting closer and closer together as he started to hyperventilate. His voice echoed back to him, and he let out a slow breath before shouting again, trying to

calm himself down to no avail. "DAD!" He yelled, voice cracking as he shouted once more. Still nothing. "TOOTHLESS! MISTY EYES!" Same results. Only the crackling of the cooling buildings replied back to him, giving him no help whatsoever. "No! Please!" Hiccup drew a hand through his hair, musing it up. "Please! Oh Gods! Not this!"

He turned back to Nightflight, slowly, as if he was frozen from the inside. The dragon's ears were flat against her head, she looked up at him cautiously, sadly. Regret shone in her eyes, and Hiccup knew that he should have been mad. He should have been furious. If it had been any other Viking in this situation, they would have killed the dragon on the spot, if only to avenge their fellow villagers' deaths. But Hiccup only looked at her desperately, as if waiting for help, or words of comfort. He opened his mouth to say something, when suddenly, Ludi squealed loudly, her cry making Hiccup's hair stand on end. The cat looked alarmed, backtracking faster than Hiccup could comprehend, her tail bushed out so she looked twice her size. Nightflight hissed with surprise as well, eyes dilating as she too backed up. Hiccup whirled around, prepared for a dragon to come crashing forward, teeth and claws flashing for his throat.

But he guessed that would have been the preferred sight.

It wasn't a Ghost Town anymore. At least not technically.

Vikings littered the ground, limp and unmoving. Bodies littering the ground like rocks in a forest. They weren't there three seconds ago—or were they? Hiccup was so surprised that he stumbled backwards, fake leg stumbling and causing him to slip out from underneath himself. He slammed into the ground, just beginning to cool off from the wildfire that swept through the town. He remained on the grass for a heartbeat, staring wide-eyed at the ground, shoulders moving up and down as if he were crying. But he was too much in shock to do anything close to that right now. It took a moment for his brain to catch up with what just happened, and even longer for it to catch up to his body. But when it finally did, Hiccup shot to his feet, rushing forward with a new-found sense of urgency.

Ludi hesitated a moment before following, eyes still wide with shock at what just happened. Though it didn't really make sense to charge into the problem at hand, Ludi would follow Hiccup wherever he went. Nightflight watched them, curling her tail tighter against herself as she ducked her head close to her chest, looking frightened. Ludi streaked beside Hiccup, stride for stride despite her smaller size. The boy staggered through the muddy ground before skidding to a stop, a small gasp raking through his throat as he came to the sudden halt. He looked down at the people on the ground, heart shooting up to clog his throat thickly. Snotlout, Ruffnut, Tuffnut, and Fishlegs were all together, it looked like. He waited a moment, pausing as if expecting Snotlout to jump up and do—well, anything. Anything would be better than this. A punch in the face, a slap, a shove so hard that he flew back a million feet. "Do anything." He tried weakly, eyes starting to blur. "Anything but this." He said, softer this time, staring down at his cousin expectantly. But he refused to do anything. He wasn't there.

Astrid wasn't with them. That was the only thing he could bear to think as he turned around, balling his hands into fists and refusing

to look back as he plodded on. That was all he could force himself to think. She wasn't there, so she had to be somewhere. Whether it was hidden from him amid everything else, or she was alive still and hiding from the dragons. Hopefully the latter of the two would be the true answer. Nevertheless, Hiccup forced himself to keep going, a chore for him. Left foot, right foot, left, right. He had to think it through, otherwise his shaky legs would prove themselves unable to keep himself upright. His eyes burned, threatening him as the images around him blurred. He concentrated on not blinking as he kept walking, eyes roving the landscape desperately.

Suddenly Ludi cried out sharply, making Hiccup stop short and turn back to look at her. The cat's ears were slicked back to her head, she bunched herself up a moment before bounding over to a woman, thrusting her head forward and pressing her forehead into her skin with a low rumble of grief. It took a moment for Hiccup to realize that it was Bertha, the woman that had given him Ludi in the first place. Ludi reached up, kneading her paws on the woman's chest as if prodding her awake. She let out a sharp yell, almost like she was chastising the woman for not looking over at her. Hiccup hugged himself, suddenly much colder than he was a moment ago.

A movement in the corner of his eye made Hiccup leap out of his skin, abruptly turning to see what had caused the flicker of life. But his heart sunk as he realized it wasn't a Viking. And his heart sunk lower as he saw what it really was. A Night Fury was crouched at the near end of the clearing, green eyes shining like beams of light in the dark village. For a moment, Hiccup didn't even have a clue who it was, it looked so harsh, so angry. The dragon glared over at him steadily, the message clear even without him speaking. "This is all your fault." Hiccup's forehead wrinkled, and he took a small step forward, towards the newcomer. "â€|Toothlessâ€|?" He asked, voice as small as the step he had taken. But the Night Fury turned quickly, not hesitating as it shot away, quick as a flash. "Wait!" Hiccup shouted, running over to where the dragon had been moments before. "Don't go! Stay!" But by the time he finally stopped running, there was no more evidence of the dragon. It had gone before Hiccup could even tell for sure whether it was Toothless or not. Shoulders hunching, Hiccup looked around a moment before turning over to Ludi. The small cat had taken to curling up next to Bertha, she wasn't paying attention to him at all. She didn't even see the dragon in the first place.

Hiccup sighed heavily, going down so that he was crouched on the grass, reaching up to hold his head in his hands. He let out a shaky breath, watching it curl into a smoke in front of him, rising up and disappearing in less than five seconds. He had no idea what to do now. Where to go. He sat here surrounded by his friends, and they were all dead. Nothing was left. Not for him, and not for Berk. Not for anybody. The thought tipped the scale, and the tears rushed down his cheeks, hot against his freezing cold skin. They tracked watery trails down his face and he didn't bother to try and wipe them away. More would just replace them.

"â€|Hiccupâ€|" A whisper reached his ears, the teen immediately snapping to his feet, turning around sharply to look behind him. "Hiccup, over hereâ€|" The voice mumbled, barely being able to be heard, even in the silence of the island. Pausing a moment, throwing a look back at both Nightflight and Ludi to make sure they were not following, he started off after the voice, regretfully leaving behind

the people that he had yet to find in the remains of the village. If he could title it that, of course. Maybe the voice was somebody who had made it, who had managed to survive the fire and the Night Furies. The thought was painstakingly hopeful, and yet, who else could have called out to him? Unless it was a dragon. The thought made his steps become almost microscopic, cautious eyes darting back and forth.

"Hello?" He asked, looking around with a hint of anxiousness.

"over here" The voice drifted.

Hiccup turned to the left, trying to follow that voice and seeing who the owner of it was. But it turned out he didn't need to follow it anymore. The sight in front of him made him stop altogether. His eyes grew hollow, haunted and scared. He moved forward, slowly at first, but picking up speed until he was running. The small group of people was like a mist, if he rushed through them, they were vanish. It wasn't real, it couldn't have been real. And yet as he came to a stop and stood over them, there was no denying. Each one of them were real, and they were all together. Either from some sort of sick joke, or just a coincidence, every single person that Hiccup was closest to on the island was lined up side by side, as if to be displayed. As if waiting for him to come by and see them.

Whoever had spoken was gone now. Or there wasn't anybody at all in the first place. Because the people that were all gathered in front of him couldn't have possibly called out to him. They couldn't do anything. Hiccup's hands went to bury themselves in his hair yet again, green eyes wide and desperate. "Come on" He said, voice breaking. This wasn't how things were supposed to be! He had gotten Nightflight on his side, he was supposed to have gone back to the island and made sure it was the same! He was supposed to save everyone and come back in an entirely different way than he had! "I did it all, this shouldn't have happened." He said weakly, going back down so that he was crouching on his knees. "I did everything." He mumbled, voice broken in every aspect by now. He raised his voice to a yell, squeezing his eyes shut tightly, moving so that his knees were close to his chest. "I DID EVERYTHING I COULD! WHY DIDN'T IT WORK!?"

His father, Gobber, Astrid, Mistyeyes, Shadowclaw—they were all here. Excluding Toothless, (who he had no idea whether he was the Night Fury from before or not) it was everybody that Hiccup most cherished in his life, old and new. The ones that put up with him for the most part and cared for him the most out of everybody on the island. And they would never do that again. Hiccup sniffed, looking over at his father, heart sinking in his stomach. He remembered the last time the two had spoken, the memory making him close his eyes, as if hiding from it. "Thanks for listening to me." He had mumbled, his father glaring sharply over at him. The last time he had encountered Gobber was when he was fighting with Astrid. Fighting—it seemed like he had left on a bad note with everyone he loved.

"I'm sorry." He said, meaning it a million and one percent. "I never meant for this to happen—it's just so messed up" He had no idea what had happened. Had all this happened because he had tried to extend friendliness to a dragon? He looked over at Nightflight,

wondering how everything got so tangled, how everything went so wrong. He turned back, looking down sadly at Astrid. The girl looked like she was asleep, curled up next to Mistyeyes. The gray Night Fury had a small grimace on her face, like she was snarling. Her face was frozen that way, and it took a moment for Hiccup to be able to tear his gaze away from her. He leaned forward, reaching over and shaking Astrid gently. "Wake up!" He tried pathetically.

Nothing.

Hiccup ducked his head, gritting his teeth together as he felt hot tears stream down his face. He opened his mouth to say something, when suddenly, Nightflight called out from where she stood. "Hiccup!" She yelled, sounding somewhat irritated. Hiccup immediately flared, whipping around to glare at her with an alarming amount of anger. She had NO right to be impatient! This was all her fault, after all! If he wanted to-

A Night Fury was barreling for him. Nightflight rushed forward, trying to beat him there. She hadn't been getting onto him about what he was doing, she was trying to warn him. Hiccup gasped sharply, dropping to the ground as quick as he could. He took cover beside Astrid, the girl's body much more colder than he had first anticipated it to be. Shutting his eyes tightly, he heard the Night Fury get closer, pushing off the ground as it rocketed for Hiccup. "TOOTHLESS!" The boy screamed, not knowing whether he was calling for help or addressing the one attacking him.

Nightflight let out another yell, sounding more temperamental. "Hiccup!"

"WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU!?" Hiccup finally exploded.

Nightflight acted like she hadn't heard him. "HICCUP!"

Hiccup jerked, eyes snapping open as he bolted up to a sitting position. He slapped his head against a low-hanging branch in the process. He grumbled underneath his breath, reaching up and rubbing the crown of his head with a pained grimace. Confused, he turned, seeing Nightflight eyeing him coldly where she sat. Ludi looked frightened, fur bushed out as her amber eyes flashed with surprise. They were back on the island. They hadâ€|they had never left? Hiccup turned, looking at the sea that stretched out in front of them. It was calmer now, not as rough and choppy as it had been when Hiccup had seen it last. The rain stopped, it had a long time ago, he thought. Had he been asleep? Had it all been a dream?

He took a few gulping breaths, looking down at the ground for a moment as he tried to shake the dream. It wasn't real, it was stupid to think it had been real in the first place. Everything was fine, it was going to be fine. They would go back to the island and everybody would be waiting for him there. It would be like nothing ever happened. Slowly, his breathing became a little closer to what it should be in the first place. Though the images clung in his mind like stubborn cobwebs, he was determined to push them back as far as he could manage. He looked back over to Nightflight and Ludi, who were still looking at him like he had morphed into a fruit and rolled away.

Staring back awkwardly for a moment, he shook himself. "How long was I asleep?" He asked, hoping he had been sleeping.

To his relief, Nightflight moved on, flicking her tail a little dismissively. "A long time." She mumbled, looking away from him. Ludi looked over at the dragon sharply, going over and sitting down beside her human. Still glaring at Nightflight, she pointedly rubbed her head comfortingly on Hiccup's hand, purring as she curled her tail around herself. The dragon eyed her, silently fuming, but just looked away once more. Hiccup looked from Ludi to Nightflight and felt like he was missing something. The dragon huffed out, answering his question before he could even ask it. "She's annoying. I don't see why she has to be around all the time. It's insufferable."

Hiccup glanced at Ludi sharply a moment, warning her. The cat ducked her head, but her eyes glimmered with amusement. She wasn't sorry at all. Shushing her, Hiccup made a move to push himself to his feet, when he stopped, eyes widening as he bit his lower lip to keep from crying out. He turned, looking over at his bad shoulder, wincing at the worsened state of it. He tried to move it, only being able to move it a few inches before the pain became too intense for him to do it anymore. They had to get back to the island, soon. Sucking in a breath, he got up without moving either of his arms, going forward and stopping beside Nightflight. "She's apart of Berk, you'll have to do a lot more than put up with Ludi when we get there." He warned her mildly.

Nightflight did not look comforted. She threw him a small look before staring down sightlessly at her paws. "It's too much of a hassle." She mumbled softly. "Nobody will ever really let me stay on the island. After everything I've done to you and your villageâ€¦" She trailed off before adding as an afterthought. "I can't go anywhere. I can't go back with youâ€¦I can't face the Pack anymoreâ€¦you should have just let me get eaten by those stupid wolves."

"But you wouldn't let me get eaten." Hiccup replied fairly. "I'm not letting anything else happen to you, I promised you that. And I intend to keep that promise." He paused a moment. "And I don't care what anybody else on Berk thinks. I'm going to make sure that they know how much you've changed, because everybody deserves a second chance, in my opinion. You're no exception to that." He gave a small nod, but realized that she probably wouldn't have been able to see him do so. He reached out with his good arm instead, hesitantly resting it on her shoulder.

She flared for a moment, whipping around to look back at him angrily. Hiccup snatched his arm away, eyes widening as he took a small step backwards. But Nightflight jumped, steeling herself once more as she looked more apologetic than angry. "Sorry." She mumbled, throwing the apology over at him. Hiccup let out a small mumble to show that she was forgiven, blinking rapidly as he got over the small jolt of shock. It looked like Nightflight wasn't at all used to have somebody concern over her, or be worried about her. Or show real, true affection to her. Hiccup found himself unable to look away from her. Nightflight's gaze did not waver either. And it was only after a few minutes did Hiccup start to realize that it wasn't a good idea to look at her so long. But it was too late by then.

Images danced in front of him, almost transparent. The longer he stared at her, the more real the images seemed to get. A small female

dragon next to another male Night Fury. Toothless. He would recognize the warm green eyes anywhere. The female -Nightflight?- giggled, happiness radiating off from her as she looked at the littler Toothless. She reached over, prodding him with her claws before hopping away, laughter echoing off of cave walls as she darted away. "Tag! You're it!" Toothless sprang to his feet, chuffing with laughter as he chased after her.

Another scene, and they were older. Nightflight was curled up tightly beside Toothless, the two looking up at the sky, at all the stars and constellations twinkling above them. They talked idly, and Nightflight almost looked like she was uncaring, like she could have done something better than this. But her tail betrayed her, curled up with a sense of happiness that could only come from being with one's most favorite person in the world. She let out a small laugh at what Toothless said, looking like she was about to say something in response. But her ears pricked suddenly, the female turning around to look back to the mouth of the cave. Mistyeyes stood a ways away, ears flicking back to her head as she met eyes with Nightflight. She was younger, face rounded with youth as she shuffled her paws nervously. She looked like she wanted to walk forward, but Nightflight scowled her way, shuffling a millimeter closer to Toothless as she looked back to him. Mistyeyes blinked, looking awkward for a moment before turning, heading back into the cave without saying anything at the rude notion. Toothless turned at her departure, blinking with confusion as he watched her leave. He opened his mouth to call out to her, when Nightflight suddenly let out a loud shout, pointing out a large collection of stars to the right. Toothless's attention was diverted a moment as he turned to look, and by the time he looked back to the cave, Mistyeyes was gone. Reluctantly, he turned back to Nightflight and the star-gazing, tail twitching with something close to impatience.

Another. They looked like they did now, fully mature and grown. Nightflight stood at the entrance of the cave, looking saddened. Mistyeyes sat beside her, a new sort of aura around her. She held her head high, much different than she had been in the last scene. She looked important now, authoritative. Nightflight wasn't going to scare her off anymore, it looked like. Toothless stood on the edge of the cliff, eyes narrowed slightly as he looked up into the sky, wings twitching, as if anxious to be off. "This is stupid." Nightflight growled, shooting an angered look over at Mistyeyes, who ignored her rudely. "You don't have to PROVE yourself by going to a few islands and irritating them." She rolled her eyes as she spoke, pausing a moment before mumbling under her breath that wasn't able to be heard by either of the two beside her.

"The Pack just thinks I'm a nuisance." Toothless said icily. "Nobody takes me seriously." His eyes flashed over to Mistyeyes, who looked away from him the same moment, taking to staring at Nightflight instead. His ears flattened, but he kept talking. "The dragons that come back from raids on the humans are respected. Mistyeyes did it once!" The gray Night Fury twitched her ear, not saying anything. "And look where she is now." Toothless went on. "Who's to say I can't have some respect too?"

"You ARE respected!" Nightflight said, voice slightly pleading by now. "The dragons that go on raids have nothing to live for, they're idiots. And Mistyeyes went on ONE. She didn't even do anything, she just stayed on the sidelines and watched. You're going out alone,

at least let me come with you." Her eyes were desperate as she looked at him, she took a step forward, trying to get closer to him. But Toothless turned, shoulders hunching over. Nightflight stopped short, one foot still raised to keep walking. She looked hurt at this, shrinking backwards. Hiccup could have sworn he saw a flash of satisfaction in Mistyeyes's eyes.

"No." Toothless said flatly. "I'm going to go alone." His tone was grim and serious for a moment, and Nightflight looked at the ground silently, downcast. But then he turned, giving a nod in her direction. "I'm a Night Fury, Nightflight. I'll be fine. No Viking has EVER managed to kill one of us, how in the world could that change with just one night?" But Nightflight did not answer, merely curling her tail closer to herself. He looked over at Mistyeyes, as if waiting for her to say something to him, a goodbye, maybe? But her eyes merely looked from Nightflight to Toothless before she nodded her head once in farewell. She turned away to retreat into the cave once more, back facing Toothless. She let out a small sigh, eyes glimmering with heartache before she drew herself up, walking away from the pair and leaving them alone.

"I'll be back by this time tomorrow." Toothless said, turning as well.

"And if you aren't?" Nightflight demanded, green eyes showing a breaking heart.

Toothless flicked an ear. "Well, then don't come after me, I guess." He said flatly. Nightflight stiffened, like she had been slapped across the face. But Toothless spread out his wings quickly, shooting away before she had a chance to object to his request. She flattened her ears, watching him fly away with a saddened look. Slowly, she ducked her head close to her chest and sighed.

"But I love you"

Nightflight broke eye contact, her eyes showing a mix of guilt and sorrow. Hiccup blinked rapidly, coming out of his entranced state and shaking himself mentally. He tried to take all of what he just saw in, knowing that it had to be important. "I should have known better." Nightflight said, slicing into his train of thought. "I should have known he never thought of me the way I did him. It was always HER. It was never me I should have seen" Her voice choked at the end, the dragon closing her sightless eyes as she sighed heavily. "All this mess and nothing has changed."

"I think you went about it the wrong way" Hiccup mumbled under his breath. Nightflight flinched away, obviously more than aware of that fact. "You should have just been happy with the friendship you had. If you had just done that, none of this would have happened." Realizing the harshness of his words, Hiccup closed his eyes. "And if I hadn't gotten in the middle of it, I guess. But, Nightflight, if you come back with me and see Berk the way it truly is I'm sure that you'll understand why Toothless stayed. You'll understand the way that dragons and humans were MEANT to be together."

Nightflight looked at him from the corner of her eye. A flash of longing went through her eyes as Hiccup spoke, but the boy went on, more firmer this time. "And I have to know that I'm going to trust you. And that you're going to trust me. I want to know that you mean

what you say, and that you won't change your mind as soon as you see Toothless. Whatever happens next, we're in this together. No backing out. Not on either of our parts." Ludi let out a meow where she sat, as if chiming in on their conversation. Hiccup jumped, surprised. He'd forgotten she was there in the first place. He turned back to her, giving her a sharp look. The cat flicked her ears, shuffling her paws in an oddly sassy way. He pointed at her accusingly. "I'm talking to you too, don't forget." He snapped.

Ludi yawned pointedly.

He let his hand drop with a huff of frustration, cracking a smile against himself. He turned back to Nightflight, looking at her expectantly. The dragon scraped the ground with her claws for a moment, slowly making a small hole in the ground. Hiccup watched her, not interrupting. Finally, the dragon spoke, voice more subdued than usual. "This is stupid. I've been one way my whole entire life. I've hated humans ever since I've first been able to catch a glimpse of the sun. I hated you for taking Toothless away from me, and I'm not even sure whether or not I still hate you. It's going too fast, I don't want to live with a bunch of humans my entire life. It's disgusting." Her voice got a little sharper at the end of the sentence, shooting an irritated look over at Hiccup.

"Well, you can't knock things until you try it." Hiccup said simply, running out of things to say.

"It's not as simple as that. You're too optimistic." Nightflight snapped, getting angry by now. She was slowly getting closer and closer to Hiccup, and it was all the boy could do to not backtrack. He stayed where he was, keeping the crawling fear out of his expression as he stared calmly over at the advancing Night Fury. "Humans are ridiculous, they act before they think! Who's to say that one day you won't turn on the dragons? After all, you jumped in front of an enemy to save them from wolves? How stupid and rash is that? You're unpredictable and-"

"And smart." Hiccup finished for her, knowing full well that it wasn't the word she was looking for. "I know that there's more to you than you think there is, and I plan to show you what it is. I can, Nightflight. If you just put a little trust in me, I can show you everything that you can't see. I can show you the way Berk is, I can show you that your days of flying don't have to be over! I can show you that you don't have to be alone. You can be with me, and maybe you can even be with Toothless."

"It's all for nothing, though." Nightflight sighed, looking drained suddenly. "Nobody could ever accept me. I'm too much of a mess." She looked away, ears flattening as she ducked her head. "I'm a mess. Nobody could ever love somebody as imperfect as me." The words were slightly surprising, Hiccup had to blink rapidly for a moment to get over it. It seemed an odd choice of words. But looking closer at Nightflight, he realized that she looked a little better after this, shoulders not as weighted down with grief. She'd been waiting to get them off their chest. Hiccup wrung his hands together nervously.

"Well, you don't have to be perfect." Hiccup said awkwardly, reaching up and rubbing the back of his neck. "The thing about love isn't perfection. That's the opposite of it actually." Nightflight

looked over at him, looking openly curious by now. She seemed to have forgotten her anger as Hiccup went on. He cleared his throat before going on. "It's about finding all the imperfections in a person and learning to love them. Nobody is perfect, so if love was for perfection, there would be none in the first place." Ludi sniffed at this, tail curling as Hiccup said the words. She bounced to her feet, going over and sitting down neatly beside him, leaning over and rubbing her cheek affectionately against his leg. "Nobody is perfect, and everybody deserves a second chance. I'm just trying to give you your's. If you'll let me, that is." He said.

"â€|You really think it'll work?" The dragon asked, slightly fearful.

"â€|No." Hiccup said, smiling. The dragon deadpanned at this, looking like she was going to smack him upside the head. "But we can make it work." He said quickly, before Nightflight could do anything she (and Hiccup, of course) would regret. "Come on, all you gotta have is a little faith. We can bury the hatchet, right? It's not that hard, actually." He remembered the way he had forgiven everybody on the island for undermining him all those years. Why couldn't Nightflight be as forgiving? If she was, everything would be so much easier. Was he going to have to comfort her every other hour like this? Hopefully notâ€| "If you don't like Berk, you can be free to leave it." Hiccup said, as an afterthought. "I'll make sure no Vikings will come after you. But I think that you'll find it a lot better than you think it is."

Nightflight hesitated a moment before giving a tense nod. Silence followed before Nightflight finally spoke up. "Soâ€|what's next?" She asked, glancing over to where the waves lapped against the shore. Hiccup followed her gaze, eyeing the dark depths of the ocean a little nervously. Sucking in a deep breath, he leaned down, picking up Ludi with one arm and holding her awkwardly against his chest. The cat squirmed a little, but gave up after a moment, taking to going limp in the weird position. She was used to being held with both arms, this was making her a little put-out. But Hiccup couldn't even move his other arm by now, which would make flying all the more wonderful.

That was sarcastic.

"Now it's the hard part." Hiccup mumbled, turning over to Nightflight with a small wince. "Nowâ€|we're both going to have to have to have patience with the other." He warned, Nightflight narrowing her eyes slightly. "This is going to be hard, and you're going to have to LISTEN to me. And I'll listen to you, okay?"

Nightflight nodded, looking exasperated.

"And you're going to have to let me ride you." He said, stating the obvious.

"Got it." Nightflight threw over, glaring at him.

Ludi flattened her ears, lashing her tail as a growl rumbled in her throat. But Hiccup wasn't about to waste any more time. The memory of his dream still stuck in his mind, a nagging thought that wouldn't leave. Without giving himself time to over think it, Hiccup turned, placing Ludi gently onto Nightflight's back, making sure that there

would be room for him as well. The cat immediately tried to regain her balance, digging her claws into Nightflight's skin as she righted herself. The dragon snarled angrily, but clamped her mouth shut tightly, making sure she wouldn't say anything she would regret. Getting onto her back one-handedly, it took Hiccup a little longer to get on than it did Ludi. But when he did, he grabbed tightly to Nightflight, managing to hold on with his bad arm as well, which caused a grimace of pain to cross his face.

Taking in a shaky breath, he did his best to push the pain away for now, giving a small nod of assent to himself. "Alright." He said, scanning the area around them up and down. "Okay, there are trees above us, so you're going to have to walk forward a little bit." The dragon complied, to his surprise, steps starting off small, but becoming more sure as she padded over to the edge of the beach. "Okay—stop." Hiccup said thoughtfully, the Night Fury stopping at once, ears flicking with alarm. "We're at the edge now, we're good." The waves rolled closer, swamping over Nightflight's legs. The dragon started, backtracking rapidly with surprise from the sudden cold touch. "It's fine! It's fine!" Hiccup said, being jostled from the sudden movement. "It's just the waves, they might sound a little farther off than they really are!"

Nightflight paused a moment, ears flicking. She muttered stubbornly, "I knew that."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Okay, go forward a little more. Stop when you feel the water again."

"I know." Nightflight snapped, slowly becoming agitated. She marched forward, with much more purpose than she had before. This time, when the waves rolled in, she wasn't as surprised. A small ripple of shock with through her as her paws touched the icy sea, but she did not flinch away from it. Hiccup narrowed his eyes, looking up into the sky and trying to figure out which way they had come from. Biting his lower lip, he twisted back around, looking to where they had been moments before. Had he and Ludi come in this way? Or was it from a different side of the island? He narrowed his eyes, trying to see it better.

"Are we just going to stand here all day?" Nightflight demanded bad-temperedly.

"I'm trying to figure out which way to go." Hiccup snapped, forcing himself to try and calm down. "I'm not sure which way we came from."

"We came from this way." Nightflight stated, looking straight forward.

"You don't even know which way you're facing!" Hiccup retorted.

But he guessed that that wasn't the best thing to say to her. Nightflight's wings shot out angrily, the dragon not pausing for a moment before she shot up into the sky. Ludi squealed loudly, sinking her claws deep into Nightflight's side as she clung to stay on. Hiccup let out a yell, tightening his hold painfully on the dragon. "Stop!" He screamed, looking down and watching as the island shrunk underneath their height. "Stop! This isn't the way to Berk! You're just going straight up!"

Nightflight let out a frustrated growl, angling herself so that she was rocketing forward. Hiccup grumbled curse words under his breath, fighting to stay on and also watch what was going on at the same time. "You have to slow down!" He yelled. "I can't see what's going on when you go this fast! We can go this fast later, when we've had practice! For now we just need to go slower!"

Nightflight growled out an insulting reply, but reluctantly slowed her pace to a leisurely stride. She looked irritated by this, but Hiccup guessed that most of the hatred was for herself and her new handicap. Ludi blinked rapidly, looking more than shocked as she straightened, sitting upright. She threw Hiccup a look, obviously still not a fan of flying. And this certainly wasn't helping her case. "That's better." Hiccup said, voice having a small edge to it by now. He scanned the sky around them, looking down as well. The island was a ways behind them already, the shape of it looking familiar to him at least. He supposed that he just had to hope they were right. It looked the same, so far. This might have been the right way in the first place.

"And another thing." He said, suddenly, thinking back to what Nightflight had shown him. "You can't do that thing anymore." Nightflight glanced over at him curiously, looking confused. "One: You can't act like you know everything, cause you don't." The dragon snarled for a moment at this, but seemed to reconsider as she quieted. "And two: you can't do that thing with your eyes anymore. Ever. It's not a good thing to do, it's what started all of this."

He had expected her to flare up at this comment, but instead, she looked sad. Guilty even. Hiccup went on before she could. "I mean, I guess you can if it's the absolute last resort. But until then, you're going to have to listen to me and not do it. It's gotten us all into this huge mess that we have to fix nowâ€¦and it'd just be better if you just don't use it again."

"What about what I did to you?" She asked. Her voice had done a 180, she was completely sincere this time, all anger gone. She was serious, thoughtful. "Wouldn't the other villagers like to talk to dragons like you can, now?" She paused, then added awkwardly, "I'm not really sure how you can hear others, I was just trying to make you able to hear me. But I'm sure that I could figure out how to do it againâ€¦if you think it's a good idea, that is."

Hiccup was stunned a moment. She was actually taking in consideration Berk. And she was openly saying that Hiccup had a say in what she did. Actually, it might not be a bad idea. If humans could understand dragons, things would probably be a lot easier. But he frowned, remembering the fright and terror he had felt when he first heard the voice of a dragon. He'd never want to wish the feeling on anybody else. But of course, they would know what was going to happen, Hiccup would tell them before he did anything. Hiccup had to figure it out all on his own. But his dad would never want anything to do with Nightflight. It would be nothing short of a miracle if they even succeeded in getting Nightflight's place in Berk at all.

"I'd have to think about that." Hiccup said. "Butâ€¦thanks."

"For what?" Nightflight asked, bemused.

"For actually listening for once." Hiccup said, grinning crookedly.

"I have my moments." Nightflight said.

Hiccup glanced at her wings, narrowing his eyes slightly. They weren't going at a steady rhythm, they were flicking and staggering in their strokes. She was nervous. It wasn't as bad as the flight coming to here, but it was making her slow down, and it made the ride bumpy and jolting at the same time. "You have to find a rhythm." He instructed, voice changing to a serious tone this time. "It'll make you go a lot faster, and the ride smoother too. I'll be your eyes since you can't see where you're going. We're fine going the way we are" -if this was the right way to Berk- "so you just need to concentrate on moving your wings to a specific beat. Okay?"

Nightflight nodded hesitantly, increasing her strokes slightly. After a while, her movements evened out, though there was still a nervous hitch in her movements. Hiccup gave a tense nod, eyes still narrowed with thought. "Okay, that's better." He said, pushing himself up ever so slightly as he craned his neck to see better. Bulks of islands were coming up from the horizon, he'd have to look at them when they got closer to see if he could recognize any of them. Which would then hopefully tell him where they were right now. They weren't going as fast as they had been before, that much was certain. It would take longer to get to Berk, and the longer it took, the more Hiccup's chest ached with sadness. He tightened his hold on Nightflight unconsciously, eyes widening slightly as he imagined what would be waiting for them when they got there. If anything would be waiting for them.

"It'll be okay." Nightflight said suddenly, rousing him from his thoughts.

Hiccup blinked rapidly, surprised. But then he smiled warmly. "Thanks." He mumbled fervently.

"We'll fix it." Nightflight said simply, as if accepting his words.

"Hopefully." Hiccup mumbled, frowning once more. He looked down glumly at the ocean, reaching over and stroking Ludi nervously as he did so. The waves were starting to get choppy again, did that mean rain on the way again? It would make the whole flying portion of this a lot harder. Then again, it seemed easier than Hiccup had first anticipated. Hopefully it would stay like that until they got to the island. The waves seemed darker than normal, too. Or maybe that was just Hiccup's imagination. His stomach twisted into knots as he looked down, and he tried to swallow the lump in his throat.

The village had to be okay.

It had to.

He repeated the words over and over in his head as they kept flying, making a point to tear his gaze away from the water and look attentively at their path. Nightflight was right, they would right their wrongs that they had done.

After all. Each of them were the cause of this problem.

And now, by some kind of cruel joke by the Fates, they were going to fix it all.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **I'm like a kid who just wont let it goâ€|**

Twisting and turning the colors in rows

I'm so intent to find out what it is.

This is my Rubik's Cubeâ€|

I know I can figure it out.

Rubik's Cube - Athlete Freaking love that song.

The beginning of the chapter was an ending I was debating on. My first idea for an ending for this story. But I dropped itâ€|for obvious reasons. But I still felt a need to write it in here, I still liked it, even if it wasn't a good idea for an ending ^^

Next chapter will be VERY amazing! I shall make it so! And if you review more, the faster the update will come! ;D

We've hit 500 reviews! So happy right now, thank you all! ^^ Think we can make 600? Cuz, you know, if we do, that would make this my most-reviewed story XP

Please review! More reviews = Faster update! Hinthinthinthint.

31. Chapter 31

The time dragged on slower than a snail coated with molasses. Although Nightflight sped up a little bit once the two got better at working together (nothing short of a miracle, mind you) it still was taking much too long to get to Berk. Minutes felt like hours, and hours felt like days. Hiccup had watched as the sun slowly got swallowed by dark clouds, another storm coming on the way. At least Hiccup knew he was getting closer, it only rained this much in Berk. But that was the only piece of evidence he had that signaled they were going the right way. Eyeing the darkening sky, Hiccup prayed that it would keep from raining long enough for them to find Berk. Flying regularly was hard enough, with rain in the mix, it would be close to impossible, what with the sun going down, too.

Ludi had managed to wedge herself between Hiccup and Nightflight, pressing up against her human snugly, faint snoring noises managing to reach Hiccup's ears from the cat. She had fallen asleep in the first hour of flying, Hiccup taking that as a notion that their flying was getting better. Or at least smoother. Though nothing had really gotten in their way yet, it was mostly just flying straight and wishing it was the right direction. He'd taken a look at the islands that they were able to pass, but none of them were ringing a bell so far. The frustration of everything going on was enough to make him explode right on the spot.

He hadn't spoken to Nightflight since the dragon had so surprisingly comforted him, and vice versa. The silence had been a comfortable one at first, but as the time started to drag on, it started to get uncomfortable, rubbing at Hiccup the wrong way. Maybe it was just the tension from his lingering dream, or the fact that he was riding a blind dragon miles and miles above the ocean, he was growing more and more agitated, skin prickling with impatience and desperation. But if Nightflight noticed, she gave no heed, seeming a lot more engrossed with keeping her wings to a specific time than Hiccup had first thought her to have been. That, or she was trying her best to ignore him.

All in all, Hiccup had completely underestimated the awkwardness of the situation. And had time to reflect on what could happen if they made it back to Berk. If the village was still there, and everybody was alright. He wondered how he could possibly explain anything that had happened, whether he could make his father and everybody else see reason, and see the piece of Nightflight that he had discovered. Vikings were never good with change, they were still having obstacles with the dragons after all this time. What would their reactions be if Hiccup showed up with the thing that created this whole mess? It would be more than hard to pull this off—and Hiccup didn't even know what Toothless and Mistyeyes would do in response. It was understandable for them and the village to dislike her, it wasn't like the hate was uncalled for. But now that's she's changed the way she has, the village might be blinded to that fact by her past actions. They might not even try to give her a second chance.

The thought made Hiccup's stomach drop. Had all this been for nothing, then?

He cleared his throat finally, if only to put something into the striking silence he had been enduring this whole time. "I think we're getting closer." He said, voice slicing through the silence abruptly. Nightflight jerked slightly with surprise at hearing the sudden words, staggering in her wing stride as she fumbled a moment. Hiccup held tightly to Nightflight as she regained her pattern from before, making sure that Ludi wouldn't be jostled and go flying off of the dragon in the process. She didn't even stir from her sleep, not even twitching an eye as Nightflight scrambled in the air. She was too dead to the world to notice if they did a barrel roll, it looked like.

Nightflight gained her recent actions easily enough, shaking her head back and forth with a small snort, as if clearing her head. She pricked her ears expectantly, giving a small nod in reply to Hiccup. The Viking gave a small sigh, letting go of Ludi when he was sure she wouldn't roll off of the dragon and down into the sea. He would have no idea how he would go back and catch her if she fell, now that he thought about it. This wasn't like riding Toothless, where Hiccup barely had to say anything for the dragon to swoop and glide in the exact way he wanted him to. Nightflight was entirely different in many ways. First off, all they could accomplish right now was flying straight—

"I think we're closer than we think we are." Nightflight said, Hiccup straightening considerably at her words. The dragon blinked her sightless eyes, as if mulling over something in her mind. By the small twitch of her ears every now and then, Hiccup wondered if she

was thinking along the same lines as he was. If so, they were more alike than Hiccup had first thought. Nightflight spoke up again, sounding a little more thoughtful than before. "I don't knowâ€¦it's a feeling, I guess. We're just close." She said it simply, as if it didn't really matter.

But Hiccup cracked a smile. "It's like you're drawn to it." He said, trying his best at teasing. Nightflight scowled at once, but did not interrupt. Whether she was waiting for him to go on, or just go ahead and throw himself down into the ocean, he had no idea. So he did the safe thing and opened his mouth again. "It's like you fit in already." He added, immediately questioning how smart he was at Nightflight's sharp sigh.

"I'm going to forget you said that." Nightflight snarled in reply, glaring straight forward now.

And yet, she did not turn down his assumption. That might not mean anything, but Hiccup could bear with it, hope that it did mean something. He genuinely felt that Nightflight could forge her way into the island, she could fit in perfectly. It wasn't like the Vikings on Berk were perfect, they've killed thousands of dragons before now. They've wrecked havoc on the dragon world just like Nightflight had down to their's, surely they would be even now, with the dragons? Both in the wrong? But then againâ€¦two wrongs don't really make a rightâ€¦

That is, if what Hiccup's been taught it true anymore.

But it seemed like everything was changing right now. Why would it be so bad to have lessons changed as well?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

"Are we any closer?" Nightflight asked suddenly, snapping Hiccup to attention. The boy straightened, blinking rapidly as he craned his neck to look around the dragon's head. He had almost started to doze off for a moment, they had been flying so long with no breaks in between. With nothing but the sky in front of them, Nightflight was getting better at flying. Hiccup hardly needed to be there to help her along, except for the passing mumble of 'bird' or 'that was nothing, just the wind.' Hiccup would have liked to say that they made a good team, but somehow he didn't think that fitted very well with the pair.

He narrowed his eyes slightly, spotting a small splotch of land on the distant horizon. Up ahead, much closer than the island itself, there were large rock structures shooting out of the ocean waters, reaching up towards the clouded sky like knives. Hiccup blinked, pausing a moment or two to make sure, stomping down the sudden excitement and happiness that was bubbling in his stomach. He should know when they got to the island, he had been living there his whole life. He thought he spotted the familiar-looking mountains the were poking out of the far-away island, and he let a small, hesitant grin come over his face. It was combined with nervousness, the small sense of fear that was left over from his dream showing in the grimace. But there was hope there, too. Hope that the island would be fine.

"Iâ€¦think soâ€¦" Hiccup said in a small mumble, still looking

worried. He accidentally prodded Ludi as he leaned forward, and this time, the cat did wake up. Stretching her jaws in a large yawn, she stretched for a moment, or as well as she could in the small space provided for her. There wasn't a lot of room on a dragon's back, if you think about it. The cat paused a moment afterwards, ears flicking back and forth for a moment as she raised her muzzle in the air, sniffing cautiously. But then she sprang to her paws, Hiccup jumping at the sudden movement from her, immediately flashing forward and making sure she did not fall. But that seemed the least of the cat's worries, for once. The silver tabby pushed forward, springing up and sitting neatly on Nightflight's head. Her eyes shined as she looked to the upcoming island, looking more than excited as she kneaded her paws on the Night Fury anxiously. She let out a small chirp, looking from Hiccup to the island. It seemed that she knew this was Berk, then.

But where was the fire? The dragons? Had the fire been put out? Or was there simply not anything left to burn? Had the dragons retreated? Or were they all on the island now, celebrating an easy victory? The questions crammed themselves into Hiccup's mind, he had to shut his eyes and hit either sides of his head to beat them out of his brain. _Stop it._ He told himself crossly, shaking himself loose. _It's fine, everything's okay. It was just a dream, stop thinking about it so much! We're going to land there, and it's going to be fine!_ He steeled himself, opening his eyes and looking over at Ludi, willing all his attentions to her and nothing else. If only to get his mind off of it. "Ludi, get down, you're going to fall."

"That can be arranged." Nightflight growled under her breath. Hiccup glared sharply at the dragon, but she was just threatening. She jerked her head to either sides when it became unbalanced, making sure the little fluff ball wouldn't fall over and smack down onto the surface of the ocean. "Little thing is too much work than its worth." She growled, trying her best to keep her head balanced. Hiccup's frown was replaced by a small smile, but before he could say anything (a thank-you, probably?) Nightflight stiffened. She perked her ears, narrowing her eyes thoughtfully. Hiccup turned, trying to see what she was hearing, but he couldn't see anything except for the rolling masses of clouds around them. "What's wrong?" He asked, tilting his head as he turned back to look at her, concerned.

"Get Ludi off of my head." She growled out suddenly, a lot more harsher than she had been a moment before. Jerking with surprise, Hiccup leaned over quickly, snatching Ludi back and holding her close to his chest. Nightflight was so preoccupied with listening for whatever she had heard before, her wings were starting to falter, the three losing altitude as they got closer to the ocean. Eyeing the water with a certain look of urgency, Hiccup reached over with his moveable arm, shaking Nightflight with a panicked look.

"Nightflight! We're getting closer to the ocean! You gotta get back up into the sky!" Nightflight wasn't paying attention, suddenly jerking roughly to the side, eyes wide as she continued to search the landscape around them blindly. "Nightflight!" Hiccup screamed, falling to the side from the rough movement. He nearly fell right off of the dragon and into the ocean, he didn't even have a saddle to make sure that something like that wouldn't happen. He caught the dragon by the neck with his bad arm right before he could, not knowing which one he would rather have had. Pain like fire swamped

his arm, shooting up his body and making him gasp sharply, eyes widening as they burned. But he grunted, twisting around and pulling himself up with his other arm. Panting with pain and fear, Hiccup righted himself, making sure that Ludi had not fallen as well. He clutched his bad arm with a flinch, having to wait until the fire shrunk down to a small burning before he could even manage to speak.

"W-What was that for!?" He shouted, more angry now. "I nearly got knocked six feet under the water! What are you even-"

"Shh!" Nightflight growled, cutting him off rudely. Hiccup readied himself for another rebuke to the dragon -who did she think she was, suddenly?- but then he snapped his mouth shut, looking down at Ludi oddly. The cat had stiffened by now, ears twitching back and forth just as if she were mirroring Nightflight's own movements. Except Ludi looked a lot more terrified, looking stricken as she looked back and forth wildly. Growing a little bit more worried, Hiccup turned around slowly, a small sense of dread worming inside him as they got lower and lower towards the water.

But right when he turned around, he realized what was making the two so worried. A small light was in the distance, gleaming a sharp shade of purple. Hiccup's eyes widened to be as big as the moon that the clouds were covering right now. He tightened his hold on both Ludi and Nightflight, voice raising into a sharp scream in a matter of moments. "LEFT LEFT LEFT!" He shouted, voice cracking at the high octave it had shot to. Nightflight let out a sharp yell, snapping to attention with no seconds left to spare. The dragon swerved to the side, the fireball smashing into the waves beneath them, causing a large tidal wave to rush over the three.

The freezing cold water rushed over the trio, Nightflight smashing down into the water from the unprepared dump. Hiccup spluttered, choking on seawater as he hacked and coughed, wildly searching for Ludi to try and help her stay afloat. Please let her be safe. He prayed silently, panicking as he splashed through the water for her frantically. But Nightflight started to pump her wings again, shooting out of the water and up into the sky. She was stumbling on her way up, Hiccup having to cling tightly to her to just stay on her. "LUDI!" He screamed, watching with horror as the water got farther and farther away from them. Nightflight let out a muffled roar, Hiccup whirling around to face her with wide eyes.

Nightflight's jaws were clamped shut tight, Ludi hanging from the dragon's mouth, swinging and flailing where she hung in midair. As Hiccup and the cat met eyes, she snapped to life, squalling and screaming with fright and indignation. Nightflight's voice echoed in Hiccup's head, he almost thought he was imagining it. "THIS IS HER, RIGHT?" The dragon roared, the boy having to wince away from the sudden increase in volume. He gave a rapid nod, but realized she wouldn't be able to see it. Swallowing uneasily for a moment, Hiccup started to bark out orders, Nightflight still spinning and crashing through the air clumsily.

"Okay, Nightflight, get in order!" Hiccup yelled sharply, head moving a mile a minute as he tried to take in everything around him at once. This whole thing was on his shoulders, one mistake, and they might as well give up. "Forget what just happened, you gotta calm down!"

There's nothing around us, we're heading the wrong way from Berk! Straighten yourself out, otherwise we're getting nowhere!" He looked at Ludi in panic, watching as pain started to replace her features, the cat starting to cry out as she struggled.

Nightflight took his advice, not giving another thought to it as she slowed her wings, turning so that she turned in a neat arc. "That's right, this is the right direction." Hiccup mumbled, looking over desperately at Berk. It was so far away. A beating of wings reached his ears. Whatever had shot at them was getting closer. "Okay." Hiccup said, closing his eyes for a moment as he braced himself. "Let go of Ludi." He said, voice strong and flat. Nightflight jerked at the directions, Ludi pausing in her complaining and turning to look at Hiccup like he was the stupidest person on the planet.

Granted, but still.

"You're going to have to drop her, and then go straight down. I'll take care of the rest, okay?"

Nightflight's eyes flashed at this statement, and if Hiccup didn't know any better, he could have sworn that he saw the dragon's grip get tighter, as if protecting the cat she had claimed to hate so much. Hiccup's hands balled into fists. The dragon was almost here! "NOW!" He screamed, more forceful this time around. Nightflight hesitated, one more second, then winced as she let her jaw go slack. Ludi fell. The cat screamed as she plummeted towards the waves, jerking and spinning in the air. "GO! FOLD YOUR WINGS BACK IN!" Hiccup yelled, voice scratching his throat as he yelled. Nightflight complied at once, unconsciously leaning forward as she started her descent. Hiccup pushed himself up, completely ignoring the fiery pain in his shoulder. Crawling forward, Hiccup braced himself up against Nightflight's neck, the dragon letting out a scared whimper. "It's fine, we're okay." Hiccup rasped, hands going out as his eyes narrowed with concentration. "A little faster, a little forward. We're fine." A dragon's roar shook the earth, covering up Ludi's shrieks of terror as she cried. Hiccup's heart tore with fear, every inch of him trembling with anxiousness. "We're fine." He said, voice breaking along with his heart. Was he a liar? Ludi was nearly on them, now. They weren't going fast enough, they were going to miss her!

At the last moment, Hiccup threw himself forward, a desperate, and last hope. He managed to snag the cat in the nick of time, just barely able to get a grip on her. Before he could drop her, he fell backwards, landing with a heavy huff onto Nightflight's back. The dragon let out a sharp shout of surprise, Ludi blinking wildly, as if not able to comprehend what just happened. Blood matted her neck fur, sticky and hot as the fur clumped together. But Hiccup had no time at all to fuss over her. He pushed himself up, breath coming in rapid pants as he bolted upright. Tucking Ludi safely in front of him, he made sure she wasn't showing all that much. He had no idea what was happening, or what would happen. "Come on, Nightflight, we have to get back to Berk. Hurry!" He said, throwing a panicked look over his shoulder, back towards where the fireball had come from. The sound of wings had stopped. There was nothing there. Swallowing uneasily, Hiccup turned stiffly, hunching his shoulders. Nightflight quickened her strides, increasing speed as she shot forward. Berk was a smudge on the horizon, would they make it?

A sudden roar split the air again, Hiccup closing his eyes as he ducked his head to his chest. "Go faster!" He yelled urgently, frustration and fear making him shake.

Nightflight shrieked back angrily. "I'm going as fast as I can!"

The wings were back. Whatever it was, it had managed to get in front of them. A large shape barreled towards them, another fireball streaking forward, aiming for them. Nightflight recognized the sound, eyes widening. "UP! NOW!" He screamed sharply, the Night Fury immediately changing her direction, climbing up into the sky. The fireball rushed underneath them, snagging Nightflight's tail, but the dragon didn't even wince at the touch. Her breath was just as fast as Hiccup's was, the dragon hyperventilating as she fumbled in her movements.

"I can't do this!" She gasped sharply, trying to pinpoint their attacker. The dragon was rushing at them. Nightflight staggered, shaking by now. Hiccup's hands flew up to his head wildly, yelling comfort at her that he hoped sounded sincere. If they stood here any longer, they were toast! They would literally be burned to a crisp! As the dragon got closer, his words got closer together, louder and more desperate. Nightflight ducked her head close to her chest, trembling where she hovered for a moment before raising her voice on her own, ears slicking back to her head as she screamed. "FLEETFOOT, STOP!" Hiccup closed his eyes, bracing for the burning heat that was going to collide into him. It was all over. This was it.

Whether or not his dream was true, he would never know. He'd never get the chance.

But suddenly everything stopped. The wings quieted, a sharp intake of breath coming from somebody in front of them. Hiccup's eyes cracked open slightly, a grimace set firmly on his face as he winced away from the scene in front of him. The Night Fury that attacked them was right in front of them, eyes wide with astonishment as it looked over at Nightflight with a stunned look. "Nightflight?" He croaked, as if he couldn't believe his eyes. The Night Fury did not reply, but flattened her ears in response, almost looking like she wanted to look away. "Is that really you?" Fleetfoot asked, sounding suddenly overjoyed. "The Pack thought you were dead! We had to retreat from the island! Without you there to lead us, everything started to fall apart!" His eyes shone with happiness as he looked at her. "I'm so happy you're safe!" Hiccup's mouth closed in a small line as he looked anxiously at Fleetfoot, wincing slightly. There was more than just friendly concern in the dragon's eyes.

Suddenly, he looked confused. "Why aren't you looking at me?" He asked, sounding hurt.

"I'm not?" Nightflight asked, changing the direction of her gaze. Her voice sounded small, as if she wasn't sure at all what to say to him. The reality of it all seemed to crash in on her in that one moment. She had gone from a mighty, fearless leader, to a dragon dependent on a human. A dragon with a human on its back. A dragon who had just unconsciously risked everything for a cat. But she had changed so that her full face shown to Fleetfoot. The Night Fury gasped sharply at the sight of her ruined features, the long claw marks raked down across her now-sightless eyes. The once smooth and beautiful face was now scarred beyond repair.

It was then that Fleetfoot noticed Hiccup. The boy had taken the hint, flattening himself as much as he could against Nightflight, trying to hide himself. Fleetfoot immediately growled sharply, ears slicking back to his head as a snarl ripped through his throat. Hiccup flinched away, grimacing as he glanced down at Ludi, shuffling over so that he was more or less sitting on her. The cat let out a small squeak, but did not budge. She went limp, the only movement she dared to make was a small shiver every now and then. The only sign that she was there, Hiccup hoped. Fleetfoot looked from Hiccup and then back to Nightflight's face. He was too shocked to say anything for a moment, but fury slowly filled each and every feature on his face. Hiccup swallowed thickly, glancing to the side and over to where Berk was. Fleetfoot was standing in between them and the island, there was no getting to Berk unless they could find a way to get past him. And for once, Hiccup's mind was blank on what to do. He couldn't think anything clearly with the look of murder on a Night Fury less than twelve feet away from them. Call him crazy.

"D-Did thisâ€¦HUMAN do this to you!?" He yowled suddenly, Hiccup flinching into Nightflight's neck. He gripped the dragon tightly, trying to either assure her that everything was under control, (it was a complete lie, but the Night Fury was slowly becoming more and more panicked) or taking strength from the dragon. Nightflight blinked rapidly, staggering slightly in her hover at the question. She looked lost for a moment, looking around wildly as if searching for an answer in the blackness of the world that pressed on her now. When she didn't answer right away, Fleetfoot shook his head quickly back and forth, a roar full of fury and absolute hatred blazing in his eyes. He drew himself up, wings splaying out at his sides for a heartbeat before he shot forward like lightening. Hiccup stiffened at the movement, straightening at once. "UP! UP!" He yelled frantically.

Nightflight obeyed, actually managing to pull off a good show. She swooped upwards almost elegantly, and when Hiccup let out a soft breath of relief, she took that into account as well. Skidding to a stop in midair, Nightflight spun back around towards where Fleetfoot had been before. He had moved of course, currently slashing through the place that Hiccup had been moments ago. She wasn't facing all the right way, but she was close. Through the terror of the situation, Hiccup had to admit, that was a pretty good feat. Especially since Nightflight was so frightened. He looked down at the dragon, actually feeling a small prickle of pride in his heart. Could this really work? Could his relationship with Nightflight continue to grow and change like it was now? Until he was as close to her Toothless was to him? As Mistyeyes was? Despite what they've been through?

Fleetfoot whirled around, fuming.

Nightflight found her tongue finally. "Yes! â€¦no." She paused a moment, as if trying to sort out her thoughts. "Not really! Fleetfoot, I'mâ€¦" She closed her eyes, letting out a small sigh, almost like a whimper. "I'm going with them. Back to their island, I mean. I regret what I've done before, I know now because of this human that there's more to life than just trying to get what you want. And doing whatever you can to get it." Fleetfoot jerked back, shock shining in his eyes as he looked with disbelief at Nightflight. The female turned away, ears flattened. "You wouldn't understand, and I don't expect you to, either."

"You can be in charge now." She went on, Hiccup perking at this. "You're in charge of the Pack now. Take them back to our other island, our true island. And stay there. Berk isn't a problem to us, it never was." Her eyes hardened somewhat, and she drew herself up. She was more like her old self, more powerful, despite her blind state. "And if you ever cross paths with Berk again, you'll have to face to me." Hiccup blinked for a moment, caught off-guard. But then a warm feeling kindled in his chest, and he smiled softly. Gratitude filled him to the brim. He was right about Nightflight after all.

"This isâ€¦" Fleetfoot was lost for words. "â€¦entirely unlike youâ€¦"

"Maybe that's a good thing." Nightflight said stiffly, sounding a little less sure now.

"No. It's not. You're being ridiculous, Nightflight!" Fleetfoot yelled, looking saddened as his eyes widened. "I like you the way that you were! You were perfect, I want _that_ Nightflight back! You know the way you feel about humans! You were entirely right that we needed to take our world back from the humans, Nightflight! Even if you can't see anymore! I can take care of you, I can help you! We can take our world back together!" Nightflight's eyes were wide, round as a million moons put together. Hiccup blinked, looking back anxiously towards Berk. It was still there, maybe a little closer now that they had moved. But stillâ€¦it was too far. Would people hear him call for help all the way out here? _Was_ there people to hear him call out? He bit his lower lip, feeling the ticking seconds like stabs to the heart.

Fleetfoot looked desperate by now. "I'll help youâ€¦because I love you, Nightflight."

The dragon jerked backwards, as if slapped. She blinked rapidly, entirely caught off-guard. She looked shocked. Hiccup glanced back at Berk once more, glancing back down at Ludi, who had poked her head out by now. She looked up at him fearfully, obviously sharing his impatience and fright. Would Nightflight change her mind? She had confided in him her fears of love. And here was a dragon right now, looking at her with wide green eyes, confessing his feelings. Everything she was scared ofâ€¦it could all disappear now, if she went with Fleetfoot. The thought made Hiccup's head reel, and he didn't try and stop it. He just watched Nightflight with cautious eyes, reaching down and putting his hand on top of Ludi's head comfortingly. The cat let out a small coo, closing her eyes as she leaned into his hand, seeking warmth.

Nightflight looked lost, like she was cornered and had no way out. She stared straight at Fleetfoot, despite her lack of vision. Like he had opened her eyes. But that wasn't the way it was! Hiccup had opened her eyes! To everything else she could be! But the Viking realized that both statements were true. Fleetfoot and Hiccup both represented different worlds. Fleetfoot was Nightflight's old lifeâ€¦safe, comforting, and a promise of a bright future, completely ridden from humans. Hiccup held a brighter future in his handsâ€¦if they could make it work. Both windows were open wide for Nightflight to jump through, but she had to chose which to take, first.

The Night Fury glanced back over her shoulder, to where Hiccup was sitting. The boy's mouth was a closed line, he refused to say anything. This was her choice, he would not stand in her way again. He had to know that she meant what she said. That she was entirely loyal to him. She would show it one way or another.

Finally, she closed her eyes, letting out a small sigh. She gave a nod, to who it was for was a mystery. Snapping her eyes open once more, she stared long and hard at Fleetfoot before speaking, voice soft. "I wish I could say that I felt the same way." She said simply, Fleetfoot straightening at her words. "But I can't. I'm not the dragon you fell in love with anymore, I've changed. Hopefully for the better. And I'm going to stay that way." She paused, adding a little stronger: "I'm a dragon of Berk now, Fleetfoot. You go your way, I'll go mine." She turned back to Hiccup. "Which way is Berk?" She asked, sounding tired.

"Turn a little bit." Hiccup mumbled, not knowing whether to smile or not.

Nightflight glanced over at Fleetfoot one last time, foggy eyes filled with sadness and maybe a little regret. But she flicked an ear in farewell, turning and spreading out her wings, heading in the direction of Berk. Fleetfoot watched them go with a dumbfounded expression, staring after them until they were almost as small as Berk. Hiccup grinned at the sight of the island below as it got closer and closer, they were home. The thought made his chest swell with both happiness and fear. This was it, then. This was what they had been waiting for. What would happen below would decide what they did next. And how they did it. And hopefully it would be smooth sailing from now on.

"You'll have to go slower." Hiccup said, eyeing the cliffs jutting out of the sea that was starting around them. "There are a lot of cliffs around here, it's not just open sky." His voice was soft, and Nightflight hummed a small note of acknowledgement at his words. A tense moment of silence passed until Hiccup shrugged. "Maybe you should just fly up, they way we'll be above any cliffs around here. It'll be easier."

"Are there any cliffs to block my way up?" Nightflight asked, coming to a hover.

"No, you're fine." Hiccup mumbled.

The Night Fury turned, jerking herself upwards clumsily before climbing into the sky. She was a little less talented at the vertical part so far, more or less pulling herself upwards, having to put her whole body into it awkwardly. Hiccup clung tightly, eyeing Ludi and making sure she was doing the same. Hiccup watched all the cliffs, waiting until they were a few inches above them before giving a small nod. "Okay, you're good." He assured her, Nightflight perking at this. She fumbled a moment as she re-angled herself.

Hiccup expected more silence, but he broke it instead. "Thank you. For what you said back there." He said softly, green eyes brimming with gratitude. "It meant a lot to me. That you would stick up Berk when you aren't even apart of it yet."

"I know who I am now. That's all there is to it." Nightflight said

simply.

"No." Hiccup said. "It's much more than that." He smiled. And after a moment, Nightflight smiled as well. Whether she had known of his expression or not, she turned back a moment, giving the human a small, almost shy grin. Hiccup reached over, putting a hand on her head affectionately. "And you know, I don't think it'll be too hard to get you to stay on Berk." Hope was in his voice, and Nightflight actually seemed pleased by this statement now. Now hiding the happiness under grouchiness anymore. It seemed as if her final doubts went along with Fleetfoot. "Actually, maybe you'll even-"

His words were cut off abruptly, something slamming into him at full-force, claws sinking into his already-ruined arm. The thing shot down, ripping him off from Nightflight and tackling him down through the air. It rammed into one of the cliffs that surrounded Berk, pinning him flush against the rock. Hiccup's eyes were wide, his breath driven out of him in whoosh, leaving him gasping for air. The pain in his shoulder was almost something that he couldn't get past, the boy twitching with every shoot of fire going up his arm. He twisted around, looking with wide eyes at Fleetfoot, who loomed over him threateningly. The dragon's eyes were filled with malice as he looked down at the boy, and Hiccup shut his eyes tightly, a scream of pain choking itself out of Hiccup's mouth as fire danced and pricked through his skin.

"Fleetfoot!" Nightflight yelped, Hiccup's head whipping around to look at her desperately. The dragoness was staggering, turning full circles as she tried to get the sense of where she was. Despite the situation, a rush of hot relief poured over Hiccup as he caught sight of Ludi. The cat had somehow managed to hang onto Nightflight, the cat clinging tightly to the dragon as she jerked and twisted through the air. Ludi let out a sharp meow, looking sad and alarmed as she looked down at Hiccup. Nightflight was still spinning. She wasn't going to get anywhere with the way she was doing things right now.

Sucking in a shaky breath, Hiccup called out to the dragon, trying to get her in the right direction at least. "Nightflight!" He yelled, voice heavy with pain as it cracked and splintered. The dragon perked, turning in the right direction (thank the gods) and flapping forward a little lopsided. She made quick work in getting there, her claws bumping against the rock as she let out a small yelp of surprise. But she recovered quickly, going forward and landing cautiously on the grainy rock. She paused a moment, panting unevenly as she let out a small shudder. But then she steeled herself, eyes narrowing as she drew herself up, glowering over towards Fleetfoot. "Fleetfoot, what are you doing?" She demanded, blinking rapidly, as if trying to clear her fuzzy eyesight. Her claws slid out threateningly, scraping against the surface of the cliff.

"Tell me that you really meant it." He said, voice stiff. Nightflight twitched with surprise, eyeing the male oddly as he spoke. He went on, voice hardening as he shook his head back and forth. "You didn't mean it, Nightflight! Look at this! It's just the human!" The female dug her claws into the rock face, looking more and more nervous by now. She was completely alone, except for Ludi, and the cat wouldn't be able to give her intrusions on where to go. If Fleetfoot attacked she wouldn't be able to do anything in defense for herself. At least not without an obscene amount of difficulty. "This

thing wasn't even strong enough to defend itself! I could kill it right now if I wanted! You need people around you that can protect you, like me! I can do ten times what this thing can for you, and you know it!" Nightflight stiffened at this, not turning his words down. Hiccup felt the first waves of panic start to swamp over him. "Come back with me, Nightflight! Please! I don't want to lose you, not right now! Not like this!"

"Fleetfoot!" Nightflight tried, wincing. Ludi leaned around the dragon a moment, looking at Hiccup with wide eyes. She looked as if she were preparing to intervene herself. Hiccup twisted, trying to get out from Fleetfoot's grip. The dragon snarled at once, digging his claws into Hiccup more. The teen jerked to a stop, wincing a moment before shooting an angry warning look over at the cat. She can be as stupid as she wanted to when this was all over. But for now, she just had to do what seemed actually right for once. She'd taken too many risks already, she was a cat for Thor's sake. She could only go so far in life. The most Hiccup had ever seen Ruffnut's cat do was occasionally getting to its feet to attack her face.

The dragoness looked lost, staring at Fleetfoot with a forlorn look. She couldn't change her mind! They were so close to Berk! They had been so close to putting this all away! Panic had engulfed Hiccup by now, he couldn't feel pain anymore, it was the last thing on his mind. He jerked forward, trying to push himself up, clawing his way out of Fleetfoot's grip. "Nightflight, don't!" He screamed, voice laden with alarm. The Night Fury jumped at his voice, looking over into his general direction. "Don't give up everything!" He grunted, struggling out from underneath the dragon. Claws ripped through his skin, but he gave no heed to it. "You can't just-" He got cut off, Fleetfoot slamming the boy down closer to the ground. His face mashed into the ground, the boy grimaced as he tried to push himself back up. But the weight was too heavy by now.

"Answer me." Fleetfoot said thinly, looking at Nightflight steadily. "You know you don't belong with humans, it's obvious." Nightflight's ears flattened as she looked down at her paws. "You belong with dragons, Nightflight! And you know it! You belong with me! Please, come back with me. Whatever you think this human has for you, he won't be able to give it to you. I have everything you could ever want, and so does the Pack." He paused, tilting his head to the side as his voice got gentler suddenly. "I know this is different, but I can help you see much better than this human can. I can promise you that."

Nightflight shuffled her paws a moment, looking at the ground silently. She looked up slowly, locking eyes with Fleetfoot. And then she gave a small smile. "Maybe you're right." She mumbled. "I can't just give up the Pack so quickly." Hiccup stiffened at once, Ludi's eyes widened considerably. The boy managed to get his head back up, looking with disbelief and alarm at Nightflight, as if he couldn't comprehend what just happened. His heart shattered into a million pieces, and it was like he was watching all of the shards fall to the ground in front of him.

"No, Nightflight, don't do this!" He yelled, voice cracking as he tried to jerk forward again. But Fleetfoot growled sharply, having enough. He leaned down close to Hiccup's ear, sucking in a deep breath and roaring as loud as he could into the boy's ear, Hiccup flinching away from the sharp noise. His ears rung, and his head spun

as Fleetfoot drew back with a low snarl. Now that the panic was being replaced with disappointment and fear, his wounds started to show themselves. Granted, most of them was because he tried to move too much, but he gritted his teeth, trying to fight against the pain.

He couldn't give up now, he was so close to being home, back at Berk. But now, looking at the way Nightflight's tail curled with happiness as she stared at Fleetfoot, Hiccup wondered if it even mattered anymore.

32. Chapter 32

A/N: **Are you Sane? Where is the Shame?**

A moment of time passes by, you cannot rewind.

Who's to blame? And where did it start?

Is there a cure for your sickness? Have you no heart?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Toothless and Mistyeyes were curled up on the ground, looking around at the island with twin gazes of relief and thoughtfulness. They were spaced apart respectively, not touching, but not far apart, either. The business on the island was in full swing, now that the Vikings had gotten a few hours of sleep from the fight. They looked strained and tired, eyes rimmed with heavy bags. But they were working anyway, the ones that had been released from the Elder, that is. The group of woman and children had returned a few hours ago, Mistyeyes having gone back to fetch them. They were working the hardest, having not fought in the long battle. Even the kids were helping, fetching things for their parents with determined looks. The island was slowly recovering, the burned shells of the houses already torn down in the short time that they had been working.

But Mistyeyes supposed that they were skilled at this whole thing by now.

A few outer shells of new houses were built by now, the men and women fixing them running out of energy fast. Dragons milled through the crowds of humans, lugging the heavy things and lifting them accordingly. Stoick was surveying the area with a look of pride in his eyes, satisfied at the quick work. Hopefully there would be at least a few houses by the time this day had ended. There was a whole separate work team on the Elder's house, that one was almost built by now. But Mistyeyes guessed that that house was the top priority so far. Right now, the Elder was just treating wounds out in the open. If the Night Furies came backâ€¦|

Mistyeyes shook her head, growling crossly to herself. That wouldn't happen.

But her expression cleared to slowly be replaced with sadness. She looked over towards where the Elder was going about her business, eyes landing immediately on Stormfly and Astrid. The girl was sitting cross-legged beside her dragon, staring down at her hands clasped tightly in her lap. The dragon was sleeping by now, most of her wounds wrapped by the Elder, and a few by Mistyeyes herself. Or at

least what she had managed to do without supplies. Toothless followed her gaze, shifting a little uncomfortably at the sight, mumbling underneath his breath. Mistyeyes turned around to look at him, eyes wide. "Is Stormfly going to be alright, then?" She asked, voice soft.

Toothless eyed the Nadder, at her torn wings with gaping holes torn through them. "It depends what you mean by okay." The Night Fury mumbled, ear flicking. "I'm not sure at all whether or not wings heal. She may never fly again."

Mistyeyes flattened her ears, staring down at the ground a moment before giving a small sigh. "Well, at least she'll live." She said softly. "Maybe-" She got cut off, Stoick suddenly speaking up, voice echoing strongly throughout the island. Her ears perked at once, the dragon straightening as she looked up and over at the chief. He looked cross, and maybe more than a little worried. His eyes were narrowed as he looked over the village, the other humans halting in their work as they turned to look at him attentively.

"Had anybody seen Hiccup?" The chief asked, eyes roving the landscape with a sudden hint of urgency. He looked over at Mistyeyes and Toothless, where Hiccup would defiantly be if he were anywhere. But when he saw the way that they were alone, his eyes widened a fraction. Mummers spread through the crowd, people exchanging shocked glances as they mumbled out Hiccup's name through the mass of people. Astrid looked up from her hands for once, glaring over at Mistyeyes and Toothless, as if she thought the dragons were keeping something from her and the rest of the village. Mistyeyes stiffened a moment, narrowing her eyes as she held the blonde's gaze. Toothless blinked, shoulders hunching as he turned away, unable to look at her.

When Hiccup didn't shove his way out of the crowd to reply to his father, Stoick drew himself up more. "HICCUP!" He yelled into the crowd, becoming agitated by now. Still nothing. The chief turned, looking with alarm over to Gobber, who had been overseeing the building of the Blacksmith's. But when the two met eyes, the man turned, abandoning his work and retreating back to Stoick. "Maybe he's in the forest." Stoick murmured when his friend came to a stop beside him. He paused a moment, turning back to the crowd a moment. "Gobber, get a search party. Go out and see if you can find him."

"Right." The man said, looking tense as he turned and rallied together a few people to go with him. Stoick watched them go, looking a little high-strung by now. It was obvious that he didn't believe his own words. He stayed like that until they had disappeared into the forest, pausing a moment before ducking his head, turning back and barking out instructions to the villagers, getting them moving once more. A little odd for somebody with a missing child, Mistyeyes thought. But she shrugged it off. He was chief, he wasn't supposed to let his feelings distract him from his job. That was the whole point.

"They wont find him." Toothless growled, stating the obvious.

Mistyeyes turned to him, eyes narrowing as little bit. "At least they're doing something." She growled, unnaturally angry towards him. The whole events of the situation caught up with her in one swipe,

she felt her anger getting the best of her. "Not sitting around moping and refusing to do anything else." She looked away, rolling her eyes for a moment. "That's the most I've heard you say in hours, and you're complaining again. Can't you just take something from Stoick? I miss him too, but you can't just--"

Toothless hissed suddenly, cutting her off.

"Stop!" Mistyeyes snapped. "You need to listen to me and get your head out of your--"

"Can you shut up for one minute!" Toothless yelled. He scrambled to his feet. "I heard something." Mistyeyes stiffened at once, sitting up and sliding her claws out at once. Toothless's eyes narrowed a moment. "No, it's nothing like that. I heardâ€¦a scream. I thinkâ€¦" He trailed off, blinking rapidly as he narrowed his eyes, trying to see through the cloudy sky. "I think it wasâ€¦Hiccup." He said softly, turning and looking at Mistyeyes with wide eyes. The gray Night Fury started, trying to see what he was talking about, but she saw nothing. She couldn't see anything either. But the dragon's yes were blazing where he stood, he looked more alive than Mistyeyes had seen inâ€¦days? How long was the battle, exactly?

"Are you sure?" She asked.

Toothless did not reply. His eyes were closed, ears erect as he strained for a sound. The light was returning in his eyes, the liveliness in him returning bit by bit. He stayed that way for a moment or two before snapping forward, whirling around quickly, eyes blazing. "I'm positive." He said, voice rasping against his throat. Mistyeyes leaned backwards, a little caught off-guard by the sudden intensity. "Mistyeyes, you have to go out there! You have to find him! He's there, I can hear him!"

"â€¦Are you sure?" She asked again, bewildered.

"POSITIVE!" Toothless repeated, much louder. "Please, I can't go out there! You have to go!"

Mistyeyes blinked, looking from the clouds to Toothless. She had no idea what he was hearing, or what he was thinking, but he seemed to believe in it with a considerable amount of faith. His eyes burned into her's, and she could almost feel the tension and burning want crackling through the air between them. She looked back up at the clouds, shuffling her paws. "â€¦That way?" She asked, nodding over towards the direction Toothless had been looking. He nodded rapidly, looking panicked as he looked over at that clouds once more. Mistyeyes shuffled awkwardly a moment before dipping her head. "Okay then. I'll be right back." She had no idea what she was going to do, butâ€¦

She turned quickly, casting one last look back at Toothless, who nodded urgently, looking like he was wishing with all his heart that he could follow her. She turned, wings shooting out at her sides as she gathered herself up, pushing off the ground and spiraling into the air neatly. She gained altitude in less than a minute, the foggy clouds enveloping her and clouding her from Toothless's point of view. The Night Fury shot forward, going as fast as she could force herself to go. Blue eyes scanning the area around her with narrowed eyes. It was going to storm soon, she'd rather not be flying during

the rain and lightening. She wondered what she was doing even now. Toothless heard something that she didn't and she's the one who has to go check it out? When there could be an obscene amount of Night Furies in wait hidden in these clouds?

But she shook her head quickly. That was just her fear getting to her, there was nothing left to scare her, the dragons had all left a long time ago. And she trusted Toothless. She always would. Even if he turned her down before, that wasn't going to make her care for him any less. And the slight hope of finding Hiccup—she made herself go even faster.

Hesitating a heartbeat, she raised her voice, shouting through the clouds as she started to dodge the cliffs and rocks that got in her way. "Hiccup!" She called out, voice seeming to echo back to her. "Hiccup, are you here! Where are you!?" She waited for a response, ears flattening as she hovered in the air a moment. She strained for a noise, something that Toothless had heard. How was she supposed to find anything? The cloud had thickened quicker than she had anticipated, it was like being in a room all alone, nothing around her. She looked all alone. The thought made her twitch, wincing away from the dark forms surrounding her.

She couldn't hear anything. It was silent.

She frowned, disappointment welling up inside of her. She turned, looking around one last time before turning, readying herself to go back to the island. But all of a sudden, a scream reached her ears, making her jerk backwards, whirling around to look the way it had come. "Hiccup!?" She yelled. There was a small growl, and then a gasp of pain. Mistyeyes gasped immediately, shooting forward like a million dragons were snapping at her heels. She flew forward as fast as she's ever gone before, freezing wind blowing back into her face. She finally heard other voices, Mistyeyes stiffening as she looked down. She was too high up. Folding her wings in close to her, she swooped down, catching sight of a cliff and moving figures. She turned, about to land. But she stiffened at once, eyes widening as she skidded to a halt in midair. She hovered, looking at the scene in front of her with horror.

Nightflight and Fleetfoot stood facing each other, Mistyeyes catching sight of Ludi, the cat near the edge of the cliff. She was curled up, eyes wide and stricken. She was terrified. And when Mistyeyes looked back towards Fleetfoot, she realized that the scream she heard was Hiccup's. The boy was pinned tightly underneath Fleetfoot, blood seeping out of the boy's skin as he struggled to breathe, gasping with a painful-sounding wheeze that scraped through his throat. They locked eyes, Hiccup sending her a small plea of help. But there wasn't feeling behind it. It was like he had already come to terms with him not getting out of this one.

"Nightflight!" Mistyeyes screamed, anger making her voice hot and flinty. "Let Hiccup go! You've lost! Your Night Furies left the island, there's nothing left for you to do! Clear out of here, and let Hiccup go! Or I'll make you!" She swooped forward, landing on the cliff and digging her claws into the rock face. She glared sourly at both Fleetfoot and Nightflight, ready to keep going, when she stopped, surprise going through her eyes as she looked at Nightflight. The dragon wasn't meeting her eyes, looking at the space that was sort of by her. Her eyes were clawed—could she not see

anymore?

Ludi scampered over, launching herself forward and landing on Mistyeyes's back, curling up tightly, shivering with fright. Mistyeyes glared at Fleetfoot, snarling deep inside her throat. "Let. Him. Go." She growled, eyes flaming with unspoken threats. "If you even remotely care about yourself and your well-being, you'll let go of Hiccup and get OUT of here." Fleetfoot curled his lip at her, wings twitching at his sides. Nightflight looked at Mistyeyes thoughtfully, up and down, like she was sizing the gray Night Fury up. Her tail lashed back and forth, she changed her gaze from Fleetfoot to Mistyeyes, or at least in their general directions where they were standing. Catching the movements, Mistyeyes turned around angrily, getting up into the female's face. "Having you caused enough TROUBLE?" She growled. "don't you realize that you've lost for once?! Or are you too _shrewd _to see past your own nose?" Narrowing her eyes, Mistyeyes spat. "You deserve whatever happened to you."

"Get away from her!" Fleetfoot snapped, eyes flashing as Mistyeyes turned back to look at him. Looking down at Hiccup once more, Mistyeyes cast a glance back to where Berk was. She had to get him back there somehow, and it was two to one. The odds were against her, but maybe if she was right and Nightflight couldn't see, she might have a chance. Even if it was a little one. She crouched down close to the ground, giving a sharp hiss as she dug her claws into the ground. She gave Fleetfoot a warning look, giving him a moment to rethink their situation. "Are you going to let him go?" She growled.

Fleetfoot bared his teeth. "Make one move to either me or Nightflight, and you'll regret it."

Mistyeyes let out a roar, leaping for Fleetfoot, aiming for his throat. When suddenly, Hiccup let out another scream, slicing through Mistyeyes's focus as she skidded to a sudden halt, eyes widening as she backtracked rapidly, sending rocks and grit spraying up around her. Fleetfoot glared over in her direction, pointedly ripping his claws an inch down Hiccup's back. Mistyeyes blinked rapidly, making a move to rush forward, when Fleetfoot repeated the action.

"STOP MOVING!" Hiccup screamed angrily at her.

"I don't-" Mistyeyes looked pained, but took a step backwards, shoulders hunched as she did so. Hiccup's face was creased with pain, he dug his fingernails into the rock, a small hissing noise coming out of his throat. Mistyeyes took another step backwards, eyes wide with confusion at what she was supposed to do. Why did Toothless had to break his stupid tail!? If he was here, it would be so much easier! She couldn't move forward without Hiccup getting hurt!

"Are you an idiot or something?" Nightflight snarled, sounding genuinely angered.

Mistyeyes turned, looking at her with confusion. But the dragon turned her nose into the air before coming forward, moving so that she was standing in front of the gray dragon. Her eyes bored into Mistyeyes's own, even though she couldn't see. She growled deep in her throat, "THINK before you act." She snapped under her breath, almost too low for Mistyeyes to even hear. This only made her look more stupid as she stared over at Nightflight oddly. But the

dragoness turned, giving a small, impatient sigh. "How long do we have to stay here?" She prompted sourly. "I'm ready to leave now." She said it simply, as if it didn't matter. Mistyeyes gritted her teeth together, scraping them back and forth with anger and agitation. She made another move to step forward, but Fleetfoot threw her a look, making her shrink backwards immediately. She looked down at Hiccup wildly, eyes almost apologetic. The Viking met her eyes a moment, looking as if he wanted to give her the same look in return. But then he offered her a smile. It was a weak one, and tinged with a small wince of pain, but it was his sloppy smile that he always had. Mistyeyes whimpered at this, shuffling her paws, as if only just being able to hold herself back.

Fleetfoot looked mildly surprised at this, though. "Aren't you going to kill him?" He asked, making the question sound like the answer should have been obvious. Nightflight stiffened a moment, looking caught off-guard. She opened her mouth to say something, but Fleetfoot went on, answering her question before she could ask it. "Isn't this the human that you were after?" When Nightflight flicked an ear in response, he shrugged. "We have him here now, we might as well take revenge. What better way to do it? They'll never find him."

Mistyeyes made a noise in her throat, getting harder and harder to stay still.

Hiccup looked up at Nightflight, silently begging for her to reconsider what she had done. The Night Fury couldn't see him, but she obviously felt the look burning into her. She was shuffling every now and then, looking uncomfortable. Mistyeyes narrowed her eyes over to the dragoness, finding her voice finally. She shoved every single thing she had ever felt for the dragon into her words. The jealousy from when she was little, the irritation when she was older, the horror at her actions, the fear of the thought of Nightflight staking her, the desperation as she watched the dragon flying Hiccup farther and farther away from them. "You're sick." Mistyeyes snarled, voice laden with venom and anger. Nightflight did not turn back to face her, but became noticeably stiffer. "You're insane, doing all this for a person that could NEVER love you back!" Nightflight jerked, as if slapped, but still refused to turn. Taking that as a challenge, Mistyeyes drew herself up tightly, blue eyes balls of fire by now. "You may be able to heal your eyes in time, but it wont matter. Your eyes aren't the things that blind you. It's your selfish EGO. And that will NEVER change. Not for somebody so nearsighted like you."

Nightflight turned slightly, eyes narrowed. "You don't know anything about me." She said stiffly.

"I don't?" Mistyeyes challenged. Nightflight didn't reply. "I know you more than you think I do."

Fleetfoot snarled, looking like he wanted to smash Mistyeyes's head against the ground. But Nightflight stopped him with a sharp look. "You say that now. Just make sure you listen to me when I talk." Nightflight said, Mistyeyes blinking rapidly at the odd statement. She straightened, blue eyes confused as she stared oddly at Nightflight, the female pacing forward cautiously until she was beside Fleetfoot. "Alright, get off of him." She barked out. "I'll take care of him."

Fleetfoot glanced over at Mistyeyes, still a warning look. "You want me to help?" He offered.

"I think I can deal with him." She said dryly. "Worst case scenario, I'll just throw him off the cliff. If the fall doesn't kill him, the swimming will." Fleetfoot hesitated a moment more before slowly nodding. He leapt off from Hiccup, pushing the boy down into the rock one last time before he left. Hiccup groaned, eyes closing tightly as he curled into himself, holding his stomach as he hissed under his breath. Mistyeyes tried to dash forward, but Fleetfoot weaved forward, blocking her way. She snarled angrily, making another move to try and get around him. The dragon's claws glinted, the male lashing forward to cut her cheek open. Mistyeyes flinched, craning her neck to look at the boy on the ground.

"Hiccup!" She yelled, voice breaking.

Nightflight paced forward, looming over Hiccup and staring down at him a moment or two, trying to figure out where he was exactly. She raised her paw, bringing it down quickly. Mistyeyes's heart stopped, and panic washed over her like a tidal wave. What would she tell Toothless!? Nightflight was going to crack Hiccup's head open like it was a nut! It was all over! Her wings splayed out, ready to fly over Fleetfoot and rush to the boy's rescue, hopefully not too late. Fleetfoot copied her movement, ready to block her way from both ends. She was trapped. And so was Hiccup.

But to Mistyeyes's utter shock and disbelief, Nightflight was aiming for Hiccup's head. She wasn't making a killing blow. Far from it. The Night Fury lashed forward, planting her paw down on Hiccup's other side. She drew her arm backwards, pulling the boy forward and into her chest, hovering over him protectively. Hiccup looked at her with slight disbelief, and the dragoness lowered her head, touching her snout to his forehead for one small heartbeat. But then she snatched her head back up, letting out a sharp yell. "NOW, MISTYEYES!" She shouted.

Mistyeyes did not move, blinking for a moment, not able to move as shock went through her. Fleetfoot turned, looking stunned as he look wide-eyed at the female. "W-What are you doing!?" He asked wildly, turning to face her with his jaw slack. "Nightflight, I thought we were a team!"

Nightflight jerked forward, covering Hiccup more protectively. "DO IT, MISTYEYES! ARE YOU STUPID OR SOMETHING!? ATTACK!" The Gray Night Fury jerked, mind snapping into action as she turned quickly, claws snapping out of their sheaths as she let out a throaty growl. She threw herself forward, smashing into Fleetfoot and tackling him down to the ground. She snarled, immediately throwing herself forward as fast she could.

"â€|Nightflight?" Hiccup asked, letting out another cough as she looked up at the dragon. He looked a little unsure, but a small hint of happiness was bordering on the edges of his eyes. The dragon looked down at him, tearing her eyes away from Mistyeyes and Fleetfoot for a moment, who were locked in battle. They were both weary from the fight beforehand, the question remained on who had enough strength left afterwards to finish this fight. "What're you doing?" Hiccup asked, sounding muffled and confused.

"You didn't actually think I'd change my mind so easily?" She sniffed, almost sounding offended. "Honestly, how long did it take you for me to just stand to be in the same place as you? It would take a lot more to make me change my mind AGAIN." Hiccup still looked confused, or maybe it was just because he was bordering on the edge of unconsciousness. Nightflight blinked, feeling a small drop of blood smear on her scales. She flicked her ears a little guiltily. "My plan was to get Fleetfoot off of you, it took a little longer when Mistyeyes came." Her voice was a little more accusing at this part.

Hiccup's eyes started to close, voice slurring slightly. "She's a good dragon. You should give her another chance." He mumbled.

"Everything is another chance to you." Nightflight said, voice a little gentler, like a mother talking to a child.

Hiccup gave a small shrug with his good shoulder. "Maybe that's just because there's good in everybody, if you look hard enough." He whispered, blinking more and more slowly. Before long he shut his eyes fully, losing consciousness as he curled up beside Nightflight. The dragon's heart got stuck in her throat, she reached over, letting her claw rest on Hiccup's cheek for a moment before she withdrew, smiling softly. "I know." She said.

"There!" Mistyeyes yelled suddenly, Nightflight turning back to look at the fight. The gray dragon had finally managed to pin Fleetfoot down to the ground, thrusting her snout down and into the Night Fury's face. "Get out of here!" She spat, digging her claws into his scales as hard as she could. He let out a yelp, trying to jerk away, but she only tightened her grip. "Get out of here, and take you PACK with you!" Mistyeyes ordered. "NEVER come back to Berk AGAIN! Or there'll be worse things than this waiting for you!"

Fleetfoot turned, looking over at Nightflight with wide eyes. She was already glowering over at him, the dragon wrapping her tail tightly around herself and Hiccup. "Get out of here, Fleetfoot." She snapped. "And never come back, if you know what's good for you. I'm a dragon of Berk now, I'll defend it and the people on it with my last breath." Mistyeyes turned and looked at her skeptically, but Nightflight's words held true. Her eyes burned with her words, and with the way Hiccup was leaning into her, Mistyeyes felt like she had missed something.

Shaking herself, she jumped backwards, off of Fleetfoot. The Night Fury scrambled to his feet, looking from Mistyeyes to Nightflight, looking lost and scared. The Gray Night Fury let out an ear-splitting roar, dashing forward and slashing her claws down his sides. "GET OUT OF HERE!" She yowled. Taking the hint this time, Fleetfoot backtracked a moment, as if not able to take his eyes off of the two, in fear of another attack. But then he spun around, wings shooting out at his sides as he leapt off of the cliff. He caught the wind, and retreated from the scene.

He was gone in less than a minute.

Mistyeyes stared after him silently before turning to face Nightflight. She looked from Hiccup, to the dragon, eyes narrowed

with distrust. Ludi blinked, tail flicking urgently as she got to her paws. The small cat dashed over to Nightflight, turning and jumping up onto the Night Fury's back. She turned, looking at Mistyeyes and giving a small but firm nod. The dragon jerked at the notion, still much more than confused. She opened her mouth to say something, but thought better of it, snapping her mouth closed.

Nightflight ducked her head, closing her eyes. "I can explain."

"You'd better." Mistyeyes said stiffly, barely giving her time to finish. "But that can be later. Hiccup needs the care of the Elder right now, we can't waste any more time than we already have." She eyed Nightflight before she walked forward, kneeling down and prodding Hiccup softly a few times, trying to shake him awake. It took a moment, but Hiccup's green eyes cracked open, the boy letting out another mumble of incoherent pain. "You have to get on my back, I'm going to take you back to Berk." She cooed, sounding much more gentler than Nightflight had.

The boy paused a moment, gasping as he accidentally moved his arm. He braced himself a moment before pushing up with his other arm, shaking as he grimaced under the strain. Nightflight leaned over, pushing her head against Hiccup's back, righting the boy and hosting him up to his feet. He staggered forward, gripping Mistyeyes and managing to get himself up onto her back. Mistyeyes gave a small nod, getting to her feet and gathering under herself, ready to shoot back up into the sky. But Hiccup cut her off, looking over at Nightflight. "We can't just leave her!" He said, words bunching together tiredly.

Mistyeyes turned, as if just remembering the dragon. "We can't stride into Berk with her either!" She protested. "The Vikings will make mince meat out of her on sight!"

"I'm not leaving without her." Hiccup said flatly, making a move to get off from her back.

"Okay, stop!" Mistyeyes said hurriedly, jerking so that Hiccup was back on. "We'll work something out, okay? But you need medical attention, and Toothless is worried sick about you!" Ludi jumped forward, landing square on Mistyeyes's head, sitting there neatly, as if she always sat there. "And we have to figure out this whole Nightflight thing, I need the whole story before we decide on doing anything at all. You know how the others would feel if we brought the thing that caused all this into the open." She looked at Nightflight sharply as she said this, the dragon's ears flattening at once.

"But she can't stay here all alone." Hiccup said, refusing to give up.

"But we can't-"

"Hide her in the forest! I'm not leaving without her!" Hiccup said, fumbling over his words yet again. He wasn't going to be able to stay awake much longer, he was already starting to give out already. Mistyeyes blinked, giving a small sigh as she looked at the dragoness across from her. This was so confusing.

"I'll be fine." Nightflight spoke up. "I'm better here, away from the

island. I'll just stay here."

Mistyeyes blinked, surprised. "â€|What?"

"I'll just wait. It's fine." Nightflight tucked her paws underneath herself. She turned to Hiccup and gave him a small smile. "I'll be right here and you can just come back here when you're a little bit more patched up, okay?" She tilted her head to the side, looking at the boy with some kind of concern. Hiccup hesitated a moment, looking as though he wanted to protest some more. But then he nodded, still looking like he would rather have stayed.

What was going on here!?

"Okay, then." Mistyeyes said. "We'll be back then." She hesitated before adding, "Hopefully soon." But Hiccup looked pretty wounded, Mistyeyes had no idea how long it would take until they would be able to come back. But from the look on Hiccup's face, it looked like he wouldn't forget about this soon, even if he was half-awake right now. She paused, dipping her head to Nightflight. "Thank you, then. Nightflight. I'm not sure what's going on right now, but I just know that you saved Hiccup. Soâ€|thank you. And I'm sure Toothless would say that as well, if he were here."

Nightflight looked away at the last statement, not replying.

"â€|We'll be back, then." Mistyeyes said softly, turning and taking off into the air. Hiccup turned, craning his neck and looking back at Nightflight, watching her until the clouds swallowed her up. When they did, he turned, laying down against Mistyeyes's back, closing his eyes as he wrapped his hands around her tightly.

"Soâ€|is everybody okay?" He asked, a small voice by now.

"Yes, everything's fine." Mistyeyes said smoothly, voice much more light now that Nightflight was gone. "A lot of wounds and most of the buildings are gone. Maybe there were a few casualties, I'm not sure. I've been out of it the past few hours. But the battle was won, the island has been searched. There's no more Night Furies." She felt the boy relax, all tension in his body releasing as he went slack.

"Good." He murmured, a smile in his voice. "â€|And Mistyeyes?" He prompted.

"Mhmm?"

"You weren't lying right?" Hiccup asked. "We're really going to go back to Nightflight?"

"â€|Of course. I wouldn't lie to you." She assured him.

"Good." Hiccup repeated. "She's changedâ€|she's better now. She trusts me, and Iâ€|" He trailed off, eyes closing as he fell unconscious once more. Mistyeyes's ears flattened at his words, a small worm of discomfort wriggling into her brain. She closed her eyes softly, letting out a slow sigh. She glanced back the way came, still feeling Nightflight's sightless gaze trained on her. An unnatural intensity for somebody who had recently lost her

eyesight.

"â€|.But can _I _trust _her?" _She whispered.

33. Chapter 33

A/N: I still do the song things, yeah. It wasn't like it was a legit contest, it was just something fun to prompt people to do. Those two songs were really cool, I liked both of them! I've always liked Deer in the Headlights, except I prefer it in its Nightcore version. If you haven't seen that, you should. It's a lot faster and a lot better to dance to when you're all alone at homeâ€| o-o (It's also the theme song to Warm Bodies, if anybody remembered my rant from a few chapters before about thatâ€|.just sayingâ€|)

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The forest was pretty much quiet, at least as quiet as it gets on Berk. The small rumbling of the work in the village drifted through the air, reaching the dragons' ears where they sat in a small circle. But there were no noises to signal anybody else was there in the forest, most likely everybody making their work centered around the island and their homes. That just left the dragons to prowl through the undergrowth, ears perked for any indication that there were more people in the woods around them. They had stalked through the woods a long time, whispering to one another and keeping as low a profile as they could, even though they knew that they were alone. But they had stopped when they figured they had gone far enough as to not have been spotted, settling down in a small circle and waiting.

They talked a little bit, but mostly, the air was thick with tension and awkwardness. Everyone in the little clearing knew that it would eventually come to an end. They couldn't stay here, that much was for certain. At least not now. And yet the question went unaddressed for a long while, the three managing to make small talk without bringing it up. Small mummings of thanks, grateful looks, relief shining in their eyes. They had made it out of the battle alive, without too many wounds, thank the gods. But the hard part seemed to only just begin.

The part where they were eventually going to have to say goodbye.

Shadowclaw was first to finally bring out the truth of the matter. Shuffling his paws, the Night Fury looked up, suddenly very focused on the sky above, which was mostly shrouded out by clouds. The other two in the group followed his gaze, but there was nothing there to look at, it seemed. But Shadowclaw was staring off into space, as if he could see something they couldn't. Without even blinking, he started speaking, voice tinged with a small hint of sadness. "So are you going to go back to the others?" He asked, tone of voice suddenly much smaller than normal. "They're going to need you now more than ever if they're going to build themselves back up again. Both of you."

Leafdapple blinked, as if startled by the question. Shadowclaw's mother nodded slowly, as if she were just going to voice those same thoughts. But she seemed slightly upset at this as well, which was understandable. She stared at Shadowclaw desperately, as if silently

willing him to look over at her, to meet her eyes. And whether Shadowclaw knew this fact or not, he kept his eyes trained fixedly on the stars overhead. Leafdapple piped up where she sat, voice more subdued than before. "They need you too." She pressed, the male turning and staring at her oddly. "Whether they know it or not. You freed them from Nightflight, after all. I'm sure they would welcome you with open wings."

The statement sounded too optimistic.

Shadowclaw opened his mouth to reply to her, when his mother stepped forward, eyes clashing with his own as she forced her eyes to meet his own. "Please come back with us." She pressed, voice strained. Shadowclaw blinked rapidly, caught off-guard by the sudden intensity in her voice. The female was suddenly desperate, as if she had bottled up what she was feeling and at this statement, it suddenly just burst out of her. She paused a moment before adding, "Please come back with ME. We can make sure that you'll be welcomed, you'll haveâ€¦" Her eyes grew sad as she took in the dragon that used to be no bigger than her paw. He was so big now. She was amazed she even recognized him. "â€¦a great futureâ€¦" She murmured, trailing off.

His ears flicked down to his head, and he snuck a glance over at Leafdapple, as if pleading for help in this situation. But the Night Fury stared back at him, almost as desperate. In his hare-brained scheme of trying to find help for Berk by going back to Nightflightâ€¦he never imagined he would have made a friend. He wasn't even aware they were friends. But here she was now, looking at him with emerald-green eyes, silently willing him to come back. She didn't want him to leave. But did he want her to leave either? The thought made him stop a moment, silenced.

But then he shook himself roughly.

"I can't leave Berk!" He objected, a little too shrilly. Wincing away a moment, he steeled himself before going on, drawing himself up quickly. "Berk needs me just as much as the Pack does, maybe even more now that the Pack nearly destroyed it." Leafdapple's ears twitched at this, the dragon growing uncomfortable at the statement, however true it was. "I treasure everything in and about Berk, and everybody on it. They're my family now. I've made friends, I've created bonds, I'veâ€¦" He trailed off, blinking slowly a moment before sighing softly. "I could never leave now. Not ever."

"Surely you don't mean that?!" His mother pressed, eyes widening. "You've got something here that is held over family?"

Shadowclaw shook his head at her, seeming almost offended by this notion. His eyes flashed at her words, looking over at her with new eyes. She was tall, much taller than him, and slender. Her wings were tucked neatly to her sides, and her eyes were beautiful. Hypnotizing, if you will. But totally different from Nightflight's own eyes. It was a different kind of hypnotizing. You couldn't look away from them. Swirls of vibrant colors were mixed into her large orbs. Light greens, yellows, and even a small shade of purple. They looked panicked now, but they looked like they could have been filled with a soft smile before. They looked like they could be so kind. And yet Shadowclaw couldn't remember. He couldn't grasp it.

He couldn't remember much about the cave. His memories were muffled, he wasn't sure when dreams met with reality back then. His memories were sharp from the moment he had first seen Toothless come back into the cave beside Nightflight. But he supposed that was when his life first started to get actually interesting. He could vaguely remember the first time he had played with Nightflight, how the dragon had taught him to fly. He remembered practicing at the task, getting better and better with his skill of flight until he could beat any of his siblings at a race. But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get a specific memory of his mother, a really good one. It was all just starry nights, sleeping beside her. That was mostly it. It was all he could come up with, really. He was so young before then, he couldn't grasp the thoughts.

He closed his eyes a moment, willing his brain to work in overdrive. _Show me that I'm not making a huge mistake._ He prayed silently, willing himself on desperately. _Didn't I have good times at the cave? Didn't I have good memories of my mother? Of my life there? And did I even ever notice Leafdapple before now? Did I play with her?_ _Nothing really happened. He gave a small mental sigh. _Please. I must have had some good times with my mother!_

Memories rushed by him, but they certainly weren't the ones he was searching for. Him playing with Nightflight, laughing shrilly as he tried to pin her tail to the ground. Dashing away from Toothless, the dragon's voice making him giggle loudly as it echoed off of the cave walls. The way he had flown all the way after Toothless, trying to keep up as best he could. Him running through the snow, Ludi bounding after him, able to match him stride for stride despite her puny size compared to his own. The nights by the fire when he sat his head down into Hiccup's lap, beaming up at Toothless childishly. The way that Hiccup could always find time to entertain him no matter what was happening. Mistyeyes giggling softly as she shoved a shower of snow over sharply, causing the white flakes to rush down in a torrent on the dragon. They were all so real, like he could reach out and touch each one. But he opened his eyes once more and they vanished, leaving him to stare over at Leafdapple and his mother, who both looked a little miffed at his lack of attention.

"No." He said, looking back in the direction of Berk. "Family is much more than what you think it is." He mumbled, eyes seeking through the trees and branches, the dragon envisioning the village as if it were right in front of him. "Family isn't something you were born into, it isn't something that you're supposed to stick to." He looked back at both of them, giving a small nod. "You find your own family. You create it. And I think I've found mine. I can't just leave it now."

The certainty in his voice must have reached them. Leafdapple looked at him a little admiringly, a little sad at his words. She opened her mouth to say something, but then snapped it shut, looking away. His mother jerked, as if slapped across the face by his words. But he forced himself not to look guilty at this. He had nothing to feel guilty about. He had made up his mind, there was no going back. He had chosen his path and he was determined to stick to it closely. He'd never stray again.

Leafdapple found her voice finally, looking at him with much more sadness than Shadowclaw had expected from her, given that he had only known her for a few days. And most of that time was spent fighting.

"Soâ€|this is it then." She said, Shadowclaw not sure at all whether it was a question or not. The female blinked slowly before muttering almost to herself, "I wish that I had gotten to know you better. Maybe we could have been good friends."

Before the male could stop himself, he blurted out his thoughts, "Of course we're good friends." Leafdapple started, eyeing the Night Fury as he went on in a rush. "We've been through a lot together, even if it hasn't been for a long time. And I'm sure that one day you'll be able to come back and stay. When things calm down." He paused awkwardly, heat rushing through him as he looked away roughly. "That is, if you want to." He mumbled under his breath.

Leafdapple blinked, interest sparking lift into her eyes. She made a move almost to go forward, but stiffened, bringing her foot back to herself almost at once. "Maybe." She said, voice sounding almost wistful. She tilted her head to the side, lost in thought for a moment. But then she grinned, doing the best she could to reflect Shadowclaw's own smile she had seen a few times. "So much fuss about a small little island. I think I'd like to come and see what everybody has been ranting about. Might be fun." She gave a small nod, but didn't go forward again. "But that's for later." She said firmly. "I belong with dragons. Not humans. Even though they both live together here. I'm staying where I am for right now."

Shadowclaw looked over at his mother. The dragoness looked hurt beyond measure, a small slice of pain going through Shadowclaw at her wounded expression. She did not reply to his own words, only looking at him as if she had never seen him before in her life. And that was partly true. He was so much bigger now, so much more mature. He came up to Toothless's shoulder now, he could fly on his own without so much as a second thought. He could fly with anybody just as easily as if he had flown his whole life, twisting and turning in the air like he was floating through water. Every one of those things he had learned from his new family. The little immature youngling that was before wasn't even close to being apart of him now, he knew that. He had grown up in a cloud of other dragons, not standing out at all. He had been nursed on tales of terror from the humans, tales of woe and strife.

But he had left for a reason. He had torn himself away from that life. Maybe these two could do the same one day. Come to Berk and see the truth behind everything they were taught. But that wasn't today, obviously. He dipped his head to the two, opening his mouth to say something. But there was rustling in the bushes, Shadowclaw stiffening at once. He whipped his head up, eyes widening at the sound of human voices coming closer. There were people coming.

Whirling around rapidly, Shadowclaw urged them urgently with his paw, nudging them forward roughly. "You gotta get out of here!" He whispered urgently, not daring to raise his voice above a whisper. "The others are coming, you gotta leave now, otherwise we have no idea what'll happen!" It was obvious that the two did not want to leave at all. They wanted to stay. And yet they didn't at the same time. Shadowclaw drew back rapidly, waiting almost impatiently for them to leave. The humans were getting closer, he could hear their footsteps slowly getting louder and closer to where they were. If they saw Night Furies still hereâ€|

His mother paced forward until they were almost nose-to-nose. The female's eyes were suddenly soft, and she rushed forward, pushing her forehead tightly against Shadowclaw's own. The action was surprising, but Shadowclaw felt a trill of warmth from the movement. She drew back quickly, blinking once as she patted his foot with her own. "I'm _so _proud." She said, voice soft as her expression. Shadowclaw smiled at her words, tail curling. "Just remember that." And without another word, she turned, letting her tail linger on Shadowclaw's own a moment before she whisked herself into the sky, coming to a hover in the air as she turned, waiting for Leafdapple.

The Night Fury hesitated a moment, casting a look back over at Shadowclaw. Almost like regret. Shadowclaw smiled and nodded to her, half-encouraging, half in understanding. She grinned, and the male hoped that she wouldn't forget how to smile. She was already good at it. But before he could voice his thoughts, the dragon turned, shooting into the sky after his mother. The two turned-tail, not looking back again as they shot up into the clouds, disappearing from Shadowclaw's view.

They were gone.

The male sat on the edge of the island, sadness forming a bubbling pit in his stomach as he stared at the spot that they had vanished.

He'd never had his heart broken before.

It hurt.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Toothless waited.

And waited.

And then waited some more.

His green eyes were filled with tension, anxiousness as he scanned the sky with a frantic sense of panic. His wings flitted at his sides, he even managed to get himself a few feet off the ground before stumbling and landing back on the ground. He glared daggers at his tail, cursing his handicap with as much venom as he could manage to fit into his thoughts. Which was a lot. The thought of him being unable to go after Hiccup was enough to make him explode in fury. He knew a hundred percent that it was Hiccup out there, Toothless would recognize his voice anywhere. He could pick the voice out of a million other's, he could find Hiccup in a crowd as big as the entire universe. And yet he couldn't go and save him from this. He was grounded.

He flattened his ears to his head, rolling his eyes crossly to himself as he looked away, dejected. There was a small patter of footsteps, Toothless straightening as he turned to look at whoever was approaching him. It was Astrid and Stormfly. The Nadder was limping as she walked, more or less stumbling. Astrid's face was pinched with strain, the girl probably holding up most of her dragon. Toothless dashed forward, propping himself up against Stormfly's other side and steadying her. The Nadder glanced over at him,

smiling. "I want to lay down here." She stated firmly. Toothless blinked with confusion, -what was different over here than other there?- but he nodded. The dragon eased her down, laying down beside her to keep her from toppling over. Astrid blinked, wringing her hands together a moment before sitting down beside her dragon, looking at her worriedly. She stroked the dragon's scaled anxiously, biting her lower lip as she watched over her.

Toothless blinked, looking down at his own paws. "Sorry." He said, catching the Nadder's attention. "For not helping you in time, I mean." He turned, gaze sliding over to the dragon's wings, shredded and mangled. It looked like somebody had taken a million sharp rocks and aimed for her wings. The Nadder twisted around, trying to unfold her wings from her sides with a pained grimace. But she only managed to give them a small twitch, the holes and gashes in her wings waving painfully as she did so. The sight made her close her eyes and turn, looking weighted down all of a sudden.

But she shook her head. "It's fine." She said smoothly. "As long as Astrid doesn't get a new dragon." Her words took on a new kind of worry, the Nadder turning to look at Astrid with a slightly fearful look. Toothless twitched his ears, following her gaze. He hadn't even tried to think of Astrid. Would she get a new dragon? After all, what was the point of one that couldn't fly? But Toothless shook his head roughly. He was being stupid. _He _hadn't been able to fly in the first place! And Hiccup took great care of him. Astrid would surely do the same.

The girl wasn't able to hear them like Hiccup could, she mistook their odd looks. She straightened, leaning over and rapidly going over Stormfly's body, anxiously look for something that had gone wrong. The Nadder watched, a slightly guilty look on her face. Toothless shook his head easily. "She wouldn't do anything like that." He assured her. "You and Astrid were made for each other." He twisted around, swinging his tail forward and showing off his lack of half his tailfin. The Nadder studied it a moment, as if going over what must have happened. She looked over at the Night Fury, looking confused. He shrugged, grinning. "I don't care if I can't fly. I could go without feeling the wind in my scales for my whole life, if I could just have Hiccup back." His voice turned slightly sad, he turned and looking over to where Mistyeyes had vanished a long time ago. "Hiccup _is _the other half of my tail fin. It's just that simple."

The Nadder twitched a moment, fumbling. "I'm sure he's fine."

Toothless simply nodded. "I hope so."

"Toothless?" The dragon straightened at his name, turning and watching as Astrid pushed herself up to her feet, coming forward and stopping right in front of him. She clasped her hands behind her back as she studied the Night Fury, blue eyes sad and a little bit guilty, just like her dragon's. "I'm sorry." She finally said, turning and sitting down beside the Night Fury's head. Toothless blinked, casting a glance over at Stormfly, but the Nadder look just as confused. "I never really did completely forgive you aboutâ€¦about Hiccup." Her voice broke slightly at the name, and she looked away a moment, observing the rebuilding of the Black Smith's. It was nearly finished. "But I realized how wrong I was. You fought just as hard as

any dragon against the others, maybe even a little harder." She smiled, reaching over and placing her hands softly against Toothless's nose. The dragon purred at this, giving his signature smile as he leaned into the touch.

At least one thing good seemed to be coming out of all this.

But suddenly there was a loud explosion, shaking the island and making Toothless stiffen at once. The Night Fury dashed forward at once, shoving Astrid a little too roughly behind him, standing in front of her and the Nadder protectively. Ripples of purple shattered over the cloudy island, a Night Fury no doubt. Toothless narrowed his eyes, crouching low to the ground as a feral snarl ripped through his throat. The other Vikings stopped their work altogether, dragons rushing forward to stand behind Toothless, forming ranks. They looked pretty fierce, and yet the dismayed looks on the Vikings' faces was enough to show the truth. If this was going to start all over, they wouldn't stand a chance.

Stoick rushed forward first, drawing his sword and standing bravely up beside Toothless. The beating of wings made itself apparent, the whole island was silent, listening to it get closer and closer. Children buried their faces in their mother's skirts, men slowly took on a look of fury and anger, fists clenching at their sides. Even if they couldn't win, the island would go down fighting, that much was for certain. After all, Vikings have always had a real stubbornness problem.

But it wasn't a fleet of dragons. It was only one. A gray shape barreled out of the clouds, swooping down quickly to the island, trying to land. Toothless's eyes widened, he pushed roughly past the chief (which was a little rude) and dashed up to the very edge of the island. His eyes gleamed hungrily as he tried to read her expression. Was she happy? Triumphant? Sad? Ashamed? Did she find Hiccup? But her face was a mask, unreadable and blank. She shot down towards Berk, landing in a skid right beside Toothless. She looked tired and worn, overstressed as she gasped for air. But she met Toothless eyes and managed to give him a smile, a small nod. She turned, and Toothless's heart rocketed straight up, clogging itself deep into his throat. It was Hiccup. He was strung across Mistyeyes's back, Ludi clinging tightly to him, looking scared but alive. Toothless frowned as he took in Hiccup's state, happiness quickly evaporating into worry. "What happened?" He asked, looking over at Mistyeyes with disbelief.

Blue eyes were weighted, sad. She looked mournful, like she had lost something very close to her. And when she met Toothless's eyes, her sadness only grew. Toothless blinked with surprise. Did she think she lost _him? _Why? "It's too long a story." She mumbled, ducking her head and looking away. "You'd better wait for Hiccup to tell you, I don't even know what's going on myself." Toothless blinked, worried look only deepening. "What?

He opened his mouth to ask something else, but Stoick rushed forward, shouldering Toothless as he looked down at his son. Toothless stumbled backwards, about to get angry at the movement. But then he sighed, figuring that it was probably coming to him. He'd done the same thing to him. But his heart broke as the distance between him and Hiccup got bigger and bigger. Astrid pushed forward, only distancing them further. But he had so many questions! Was he okay?

Was he alive? Was he going to be alright? What were his injuries? How many injuries were there in total? His paws kneaded the ground anxiously as he tried to peer over the small crowd forming in front of him. He'd been the one to hear Hiccup in the first place! Frustration welled up inside of him, and he finally turned in a huff, glaring at the ground as if it were its fault.

"Son?" Stoick asked, reaching over and putting a hand on Hiccup's shoulder, shaking it a little rougher than needed.

At once, Hiccup let out a shrill scream as his father touched his bad shoulder, jerking away as hard as he could to try and escape the fire that the touch had ignited. He fell off of Mistyeyes, letting out another scream as he twisted down, slamming into the ground painfully. The Night Fury blinked, dancing on her paws as she tried to stop from stepping on him. Stoick stiffened, turning and going over to kneel down beside his son, a panicked look on his face as he tried to find a way to hold him without hurting him. Wounds were all over him, there was really no way to do that.

"What's your probl-" He turned over, looking over and locking eyes with his dad. He blinked, eyes widening considerably. But they were sleepy, glazed over. Stoick wondered if he was even awake consciously yet. Hiccup blinked, looking like he had just been hit over the head with a surprise attack. "Dad?" He asked. His father nodded, still looking unsure what to do. He tried to find a way where he could pick Hiccup up, but wounds seemed to be everywhere. There wasn't anywhere he could touch him without hurting him, it looked like. But Hiccup was rambling by now. "Dad, is that really you?" He asked, voice choking as tears beaded in his eyes. Stoick stiffened at this, eyes widening.

Hiccup reached over shakily, touching his dad's arm as if to make sure that he was real. "You're not dead." He said, voice raising somewhat, and cracking. He looked over, catching sight of everybody else around them. He managed to miraculously sit upright, so quick that it made Stoick jump with surprise. The boy looked to each and every one, clouded eyes widening as he smiled. "Everybody's here!" He said, words bunching together sloppily. "Nobody is!" He trailed off, blinking as his smile faded. He locked eyes with Astrid, the blonde stiffening at once. She bit her lower lip, hands wringing together. "Astrid!" Hiccup's half-awake state was getting slower, he was falling asleep again. The Elder pushed her way into the crowd, already holding the healing herbs that she had managed to scavenge. It didn't look enough.

Hiccup reached over, as if he wanted to get closer to her. "Astrid, I'm so sorry!" His eyes drooped, he started to slacken back. "I'm!" He trailed off, eyes closing in on themselves as he fell backwards. Stoick reached out, catching him as gently as he could. But Hiccup fell unconscious again, he wasn't awake to complain about it. The Elder immediately took Hiccup, laying him down on the ground and starting to examine him closely. She was mumbling to herself, eyes narrowed as she traced her hand across the boy, feeling for internal injuries.

She started to list all of them to herself, eyeing her small heap of herbs almost angrily. "Arm is infected! leg nearly broken! maybe some rib injuries! wounds that could be infected!" Mistyeyes shut her eyes, turning abruptly and making her way out of the crowd.

Stoick blinked, reaching over and putting his hand on her shoulder. The Night Fury turned, blinking rapidly with surprise. The Chief nodded to her. "Thank you." He said fervently, Mistyeyes stiffening with shock. "For everything."

She nodded awkwardly, turning and hunching her shoulders before bounding away. Toothless blinked, casting a glance back at Hiccup once before turning and following her. "Hey." He panted when they had gotten far enough away. Mistyeyes hesitated a moment before turning, a small frown on her face, ears flicked down to her head. "Hey, what's the matter?" He asked, tilting his head. She didn't reply, blue eyes weighted down with the same sense of weird loss. "Will you tell me?" He asked.

But Mistyeyes didn't reply. She just stepped forward, pushing herself closer to Toothless and pushing her head underneath Toothless's own. She closed her eyes tightly, as if savoring every single moment she could, as if she were running out of time. Toothless thought of pulling away, but shoving the thought away at once. He pressed against her comfortingly, not saying anything, and waiting for her to. She finally mumbled out something. "Everything is going to change now, isn't it?" She murmured softly. "It will never be the same. Not ever."

Toothless wasn't sure what to say, so he kept his mouth shut. He only gave Mistyeyes the comfort she needed for whatever was bothering her. She looked like she was put through a lot. She looked like she was holding something back. And whatever it was, it had to be something terrible. "No it won't, why would it?" Toothless asked, craning his neck awkwardly to be able to look down at her. The Gray Night Fury didn't say anything, only staring down at the ground silently.

But then she shook herself, tearing herself away from Toothless and drawing herself up. Her face became expressionless once more, and she turned stiffly, back facing the male. "The Elder is going to need more herbs." She said thinly. Toothless blinked, ears flattening to his head at the crisp tone. It was the tone of voice that he never liked hearing her use. But he guessed that he had deserved it, really. He felt a surge of guilt as he thought of the way he had treated Mistyeyes during the battle. She could have been another enemy for all Toothless gave her.

"Hey, Mistyeyes." He said, cutting the dragon off as she started to walk away. The dragon perked her ears, turning around with a small blink of her eyes. He shuffled his paws, looking embarrassed "I'm sorry. For everything." How many times had he apologized to this dragon? It felt like a million. "I wasn't acting like myself back there, I wasn't much help. And...yes. I prefer you over Nightflight." He blinked, swallowing uncomfortable a moment. "I...kinda always have."

Mistyeyes stiffened at this confession, eyes widening. But she didn't seem all that thrilled to hear him say that. Anxiously, she mumbled a reply. "Are you sure about that? You won't...change your mind soon?" Her blue eyes flashed with sorrow as she said this, but Toothless was lost. If there was meaning behind her words, it was lost on him. He narrowed his eyes, tilting his head to the side as if to emphasize his confusion. Mistyeyes jerked, shaking her head roughly back and forth as she turned back around, shoulders hunching. "Forget I said anything." She said. "Talk to me again in a couple of

days."

"...What?" Weren't people supposed to be happy when something like this happened? "Mistyeyes, what're you-"

"Do you want to help Hiccup or not?" She said, turning and shooting a look back at him that could have melted him to the bone. If he had not been fire-proof of course. He blinked rapidly, why too startled to even try and reply to her. She shook her head once more, sighing softly. She suddenly looked tired once more, worn-out from the battle and everything else that had happened before now. "Let's just...let's just go." She huffed, turning and starting back into the woods.

Toothless's ears flicked. He opened his mouth to call out to her, to try and get her back here so he could try and get some actual sense out of her. But he thought better of it. It would probably only make things worse. He sighed, hoisting himself to his feet and charging after her, having to run to catch up. Mistyeyes refused to even look at him the whole way into the forest, only speaking to him as instructions for which plants to pick and what they would do. But Toothless wasn't thinking about the herbs at all.

His heart (and pride) stung with his supposed-rejection, he wasn't sure at all how he should feel about what Mistyeyes had just told him.

What did she mean, talk to me in a few days?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: Fixed bad ending~! WOOT~!

Gotta go!

(PS: MISTYEYES IS SAD ABOUT NIGHTFLIGHT) case yall didn't get meh drift. ;)

Reviews! ;D

34. Chapter 34

A/N: Thank you to those who reviewed! I really enjoyed hearing from you all! ^^

For those who haven't noticed and have seen the movie, I have indeed started a Rise of the Guardians fanfiction! I spiffed up the idea and worked out the kinks, and I think that it's going to be a really good story. Hopefully it'll be as popular as this one seems to have become! :D

And if you guys could boost me up to reach 600 reviews, you have NO idea how happy I would become. It'd be my most-reviewed story, and it'd be just amazing. I have high hopes for this story, as well as my Rise of the Guardians one ^^

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Toothless was curled up beside Shadowclaw, the younger dragon smiling

as he played with Ludi. The little cat was roughly the size of his paw, and yet she held no fear as she bounced around him happily, tail sticking straight up into the air. She weaved around quickly underneath him, flashing away like lightening as Shadowclaw tried to pin her tail to the ground. The cat had been weary the past couple of days, moping around the island when she wasn't sleeping off her tiredness. But after she had recovered as much as she could without Hiccup, she was mostly back to her old self. The cat was getting under everyone's feet again, being noisy and causing a ruckus. Just like she always did. It was almost good to have her back, it gave a sense of normality to the island.

Toothless turned to survey the slowly-recovering island, giving a small nod as he did so. It was coming along quick, actually. It's probably been almost a week since Hiccup had returned back to the island, the village was mostly recovered by now. More and more Vikings were being released from the Elder every day to help with repairs, most all of them having a new scar etched deep into their skin. But they seemed to pay no heed to it, diving right into the work they were assigned without complaint. Most of the buildings were rebuilt now, all they had to do now was the decorations that gave Berk its spirit.

There had been no signal of the Night Furies coming back. Not that Toothless could tell. He had Mistyeyes -who had begun to change back to her normal self as well- do laps around the island every day to check for signs that would say otherwise. He would do it himself, but he couldn't fly anymore. At least not without Hiccup. And the boy hadn't reappeared from the Elder's house yet. As soon as he was carried into the Elder's house, it was like he didn't exist anymore. Nobody brought him up, Toothless wasn't able to see him. He would have thought the whole thing to be fishy, if he didn't see Stoick walking into the Elder's house so much.

Sometimes at night, Hiccup used to turn around to him and confide in his dragon how he felt. How some days his father didn't seem to care about him, or even make an attempt to notice him. Toothless used to nod along with the conversation, understanding. Sometimes he even agreed privately with what the boy was saying. But Toothless perked as he caught sight of Stoick. He had just finished supervising the work done on Snotlout's house, and was now turning back around and walking away. Toothless followed him with a careful look, tail twitching. The chief glanced over the village one last time before heading back into the Elder's house.

Toothless wouldn't agree with Hiccup anymore. And he reminded himself to contradict his human next time he tried to undermine the relationship between him and his father.

Because that was the fourth time that Stoick went into the Elder's house.

In the last hour.

He'd been watching.

"Hey!" Toothless straightened, turning and looking over to who had called out. Mistyeyes swooped down from her flight, landing on the grass with a neat little thump. Her ears flicked, and she panted a moment before going on. "It's all clear." She paused, then added.

"Again." Her blue eyes glimmered at the last part, reaching over and prodding Toothless playfully at his indignant look. "I'm only joking." She sighed, turning and sitting down neatly beside him. She eyed Ludi and Shadowclaw, the cat launching herself over and crashing into the dragon's nose, twisting around and falling back clumsily to the ground. She tilted her head to the side, "Shouldn't they be doing something productive?" She mused.

Toothless shrugged. "The whole thing is done, more or less." He replied simply, observing the island yet again. "We've made quick work on rebuilding it all."

"Yup." Mistyeyes said, smiling despite herself. "We've rebuilt the island, and we haven't seen even a flash of another Night Fury in ages." She said, eyes flashing as she spoke. Toothless blinked, sensing the small change in her tone as he looked over at her oddly. But she had recovered so smoothly, Toothless even wondered if she messed up in the first place. "Has Hiccup been out, yet?" She asked, craning her neck so that she could see over to the Elder's house. Toothless followed her gaze with a shake of his head. Stoick hasn't come out yet, either. Usually his visits were short.

Mistyeyes gave a small sigh, but she didn't complain. Instead, she looked up at the sky, eyes narrowing slightly as she looked up at the sun. It was at its highest point, it was some time around noon. Toothless flicked his ears with faint surprise, he hadn't realized it was this late. Mistyeyes spoke up, sounding a little bit more thoughtful than she had been a moment before. "I think I'm going to do another lap around the island." She mumbled, getting to her feet and starting away from the island's edge. Toothless started, turning back to look at her, confused.

"Why?" He asked, looking back out over the ocean. "Did you see something?" He asked.

Mistyeyes turned, looking innocent. "Of course not." She said, tone clipped. "I just need something to do other than sitting around here doing nothing." She glanced over at Shadowclaw and Ludi, who were now trying to race each other from one end of the island to the other. Her eyes flashed once more, and Toothless's gaze hardened slightly. Before now, Mistyeyes would have leapt at the chance to play with the two, it was something she tried to do as much as she could. Something was bugging her, something was off. But she seemed to shake herself out of it, turning around and heading over to the other side of the island. Toothless's eyes narrowed.

"Where are you going?" He questioned, tilting his head to the side.

Mistyeyes straightened, turning around and eyeing him almost angrily. "What, you don't trust me?" She demanded, eyes flashing with fury and a little frustration. "I can't take a walk around the island without alerting you as to where I am heading?" Toothless blinked, a little surprised by her rapid change in mood. She was growling underneath her breath, and she started to turn away again. "When are you going to finally realize that I just might be actually loyal? Hiccup knows it! So why don't you?" She paused a moment before grumbling, "I'm going to check on Astrid and Stormfly down at their house. Stormfly figured out that she'll never be able to fly again yesterday. I want to comfort her." She started to go away once more, when suddenly, she

halted, looking back.

Toothless was laughing.

The Night Fury was doubled over a moment, eyes closed as he shook with silent giggles. Shadowclaw straightened, as surprised as Mistyeyes was, it seemed. Ludi crashed into his leg, batting at it with sheathed claws. But when she realized that he wasn't paying attention anymore, she huffed, wrinkling her nose in a small pout. She turned, following his gaze as she looked at Toothless oddly. The dragon didn't seem like the one to crack up. Or as long as Ludi had known him, that is. But then again, she had been given to Hiccup at the worst time, it seemed.

When he finally got control over himself again, Toothless gave a huge sigh, looking back up at Mistyeyes, eyes glimmering with amusement. The gray dragoness looked miffed and confused, a mix of the two emotions. She looked at a loss of what to do, looking around awkwardly. Toothless grinned before saying, "Mistyeyes, have I ever told you that you are a _terrible _liar?" His words were laced with amusement, and Mistyeyes had to fight back a smile herself. Instead, her ears flattened in an embarrassed sort of way, ducking her head aside in case she did smile.

"No." She snapped, words sparked with irritation.

"Well you are." He said simply. Shadowclaw smirked where he stood, as if agreeing.

"Ohâ€¦" Mistyeyes searched for something to say, but couldn't. She huffed out a frustrated sigh, sitting down where she was and looking over at Toothless skeptically. "I give up then." She said, clawing out a wavy line in the dirt. Toothless watched her make the line longer and longer, not speaking for a moment. He curled his tail over his paws, switching his gaze as he looked at her closely. Something seemed to be sticking to her, bugging her. But she didn't seem to want to talk about it.

He remembered what she had said before. "You'd better wait for Hiccup to tell you, I don't even know what's going on myself." He cast another look back at the Elder's home, blinking slowly. Stoick was just making his way out, looking like a load had been lifted off from his shoulders. Toothless sat a little straighter. Did that mean that Hiccup was better? Was he awake? He wouldn't be surprised if Hiccup had managed to get Mistyeyes led on a big escapade. After all, he did the same with Toothless.

He would find out sooner or later. He wouldn't bother Mistyeyes. She seemed bothered enough already.

"Hey." He said suddenly, turning back to her. She blinked, as if roused from her thoughts as she met his eyes. They locked eyes, and he didn't speak for a heartbeat, savoring the moment. But then he smiled. "You remember the time that we were taught to fly for the first time?" He asked. Mistyeyes looked surprised by the question, but then grinned, immediately going from what had been troubling her to her memories. Her hard barrier melted, and she was the dragon that Toothless loved again.

â€¦Loved?

He meant loved to _see_. Better than her moping all the time.

"Yes." She snorted. "And I remember how long it took you to get it right!" She laughed. "We were up from dawn until dusk trying to get you to catch the wind, but you always slid too far to the right, or something went wrong." Her blue eyes filled with humor. "I remember the way that you crashed into Nightflight and caused both of you to go into a tailspin. And then how you stayed up till midnight after we all left trying to work it out."

"You remember all that?" Toothless asked, smirking.

"Of course I did. It was torture, waiting for you to get it right." She sniffed, turning her nose. "Boring too, you were so irritating. Even back then." She looked him up and down. "You haven't changed much, have you?"

Toothless nodded. "I guess not." He said. Mistyeyes paused a moment, casting a glance over the sea almost uncomfortably. Toothless's ears twitched. She really wanted to do another lap. Getting to his feet, Toothless jerked his head over towards the direction the dragoness was staring. "Go ahead." He said, turning towards the Elder's house. "I'm going to see if the Elder will let me in to see Hiccup."

Mistyeyes looked confused. But Toothless turned, bounding over to the house that was on the peak of the hill. And when he looked back over his shoulder, Mistyeyes was gone. She was flying around the island again, slowly making her way across the ocean.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Everything hurt. But then again, it didn't. It was like the perfect combination of pain and comfort, which he guessed was better than it was before. He couldn't really remember much, the last thing he remembered was leaving Nightflight back on the rock. Was she still there? Was she waiting for him? Or had the others already found her and killed her? He forced his eyes to open, no matter how much his body was screaming at him to stay still. He pushed himself up, blinking slowly as he dragged himself (with difficulty) out of the haze that swamped his mind. Where was he?

He tried to stand up, but as soon as he shuffled to the side, pain lashed up his arm. He winced, looking down to see it firmly bounded to his chest. It was wrapped up tightly, the binding oddly cool against his skin. It was like it put out the fire and was now keeping it kindled to a small flame. He tried to move his arm once more, but the binding was too tight. He grimaced at the action, immediately regretting the decision. He should just leave things where they lie.

It was then that he realized he wasn't alone. Looking around the room (head spinning as he did so) he could see a few Vikings like him resting. Some were starting to stand, as if preparing themselves to leave. But a few were in bed, eyes closed as they snored softly. They all shared wounds close to Hiccup's. Claw marks, scratches, bruises, gashes. He guess that it was all from the battle with the Night Furies. And he wondered dimly if anybody had died.

"Hiccup?" His name broke his concentration, the boy turning around to look towards the voice. Astrid stood off the side, sitting on the ground beside Toothless, who was curled around her like a snake, asleep. Small snores came from the Night Fury. Which was a relief. If he snored like he usually did, the whole village would probably wake up. Carefully stepping out from Toothless's hold, Astrid went over, leaning down and looking at him with concern. "Are you okay?" She asked. "You still look a little fuzzyâ€¦"

Hiccup blinked rapidly, shooing the clinging fog out from the back of his mind, forcing himself to concentrate. The images around him became less fuzzy, and he let out a small sigh of relief. "I'm fine." He said, reaching up and rubbing the side of his head with a grimace. He looked back over at Astrid, and suddenly remembered everything. He gasped slightly, Astrid jumping at the sudden noise. She made a move to try and help him, but Hiccup recovered, closing his eyes and looking away. "Astrid, I'm sorry. For everything. I wasn't myself, I didn't know what I was doingâ€¦.I-"

Astrid reached over quickly, grabbing the front of his shirt and pulling him up so that their noses were touching. She looked SO much more than infuriated. Her blue eyes glared daggers into his own frightened ones, and her grip was so tight that Hiccup was sure he'd never be able to pry her off no matter how hard he tried. She looked so mad that Hiccup was actually expecting her to explode right on the spot. His green eyes flashed over to Toothless, pleading for help. But the Night Fury was still sleeping. He deadpanned. _I hate you._

But instead of exploding, Astrid yanked Hiccup forward a little too harshly, mashing her lips together with his own. Hiccup's eyes widened, caught way off-guard. He thought she was about to kill him, punch him in the face, and throw him into the ocean. Not necessarily in that order. It was what he deserved, it was what he almost wanted. He'd been so angry at everybody, surely he wasn't going to get off this easily? Even if Nightflight had been the cause of itâ€¦

When Astrid pulled back, her grip loosened. Her eyes became soft, a bittersweet sort of emotion overcoming her face. "You made me think that I was going to lose you." She sighed, looking at him fixedly. "Please don't do it ever again. This is like the millionth time. I'm going to get sick of it soon." Hiccup blinked rapidly, unable to reply. But then he smiled, eyes stinging as he grinned back at her. He didn't deserve her. He never did, really. Astrid seemed to know exactly what he was thinking, leaning down and wrapping her hands loosely around him, being careful as to not hit any of his injuries. Hiccup hugged her back awkwardly with his one hand, holding onto her as tightly as he could.

She was real this time.

"What happened to you?" She asked, pulling back and looking at him in concern.

Hiccup opened his mouth to reply, but snapped it shut, starting. Nightflight. He couldn't tell her yet. Not yet, he had to find a way to describe how she had changed. To clear her name somehow. And he knew that it would be nothing short of impossible. He reached up, rubbing the back of his neck uncomfortably. "Astridâ€¦" The blonde

blinked, looking worried as she let her arms drop slack to her sides. "I can explain. Okay? I can explain everything." Astrid looked at him a little oddly at this. "But you just gotta let me figure out how to. It's complicated." The last word ended in a small mumble. _That was an understatement.

"You can tell me anything, Hiccup." Astrid said, sounding almost hurt.

"Yeah, I know." Hiccup said uncomfortably. "But trust me. I'll tell you when I sort it all out." He glanced over to the door. The Elder seemed to be nowhere, she'd disappeared. That was when she was most dangerous. "Can you help me to the door?" He asked, nodding in its direction. "I need to go find Mistyeyes." Where was the gray dragon? Was she with Nightflight? Where was Nightflight? Obviously the Vikings haven't found her yet, otherwise Astrid would have told him already in triumph. That meant he still had a chance. However small it was, he was going to do his best to take it.

"Sure." Astrid said, still looking at him worriedly. She leaned down, putting one hand around Hiccup's waist and the other around his wrist. He pulled him up as quickly as she could, silently thanking the gods that Hiccup wasn't nearly as heavy as Snotlout. That way they would have a problem. But he was light, he leaned heavily against Astrid as he grimaced in pain. "You okay?" She asked quickly, startled. Did she cause him that? But he shook his head, smiling weakly.

"Let's go." He grunted, hopping off of his bad foot with a wince.

Toothless chose this time to wake up. The Night Fury perked at once, getting to his feet and weaving his way quickly in front of them. His green eyes were wide as he looked at Hiccup. He trembled, as if just managing to hold himself back from leaping at him. "You're okay! You're alive! Thank goodness! You had me so worried! Don't do it again!" He rambled on like that, Hiccup smiling despite himself. He felt a fresh wave of relief at seeing Toothless, knowing he was okay. At least some things he didn't have to worry about.

Suddenly, Toothless became serious. "Mistyeyes said something was going on. She said that it was something to do with you."

"Awh." Hiccup gushed. "I love you too, Bud."

"Hiccup, I'm being serious!"

"Oh, you missed me! That's cool, I missed you too~!"

Toothless glared at him, all happiness from before melting at once.

Hiccup threw him a look, sticking his tongue out at the Night Fury as he started forward once more. Astrid jumped slightly, walking slowly beside him, helping to prop him up. She helped open the door, the two heading outside at an agonizingly-slow pace.

Toothless blinked, eyes slowly narrowing before jumping to his feet, following the two.

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A/N: Hope that wasn't too short! I was really procrastinating on this one. XP

Knock-Knock!

Who's there?

Procrastination!

Procrastination who?

I'll tell you later ;3

OLD JOKE ALERT! Lol Please review~! ^^

35. Chapter 35

A/N: â€|I'm not dead. O-o

I am very much alive.

And still waiting for 600 reviews. ;D

ITACLIS MEAN THOUGHTS~!

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Mistyeyes sighed heavily where she sat on the large rock spire, blue eyes weighted down as she stared across the ocean. Nightflight sat silently behind her, eyes downcast as the dragoness refused to look up at the gray Night Fury. It had been silent for a long time, the deafening noise that pressed down on Mistyeyes's ears save for the pounding of the waves down below. Neither of the two had spoken for the length of time that she had been here. But suddenly the dragon's eyes suddenly narrowed, not turning around as she started to speak. "I don't know what you're trying to do." She said simply, Nightflight perking where she sat. "It's not like the people will forgive you for what you've done."

The dragoness's ears flicked back to her head, wincing slightly. "They might not recognize me." She offered, a poor excuse at best. Mistyeyes scoffed, turning and pointedly rolling her eyes at her. Nightflight couldn't see the rude movement, but seemed to catch the drift, shuffling her paws closer to herself nervously. "I know I can be better." She finally sighed, Mistyeyes blinking at the odd amount of tiredness in her voice. "I know I can be better, and I know that I can fix what I've wronged."

Mistyeyes pushed the flash of shock away. "That doesn't change anything." She said, voice barbed with anger. "You've destroyed nearly everything in Berk. They've had more funerals in these past few days than they usually do in a month." The black Night Fury turned away, shoulders hunching as if a great weight suddenly slammed down onto them. But Mistyeyes refused to let her guard down. "Hiccup was nearly killed about a million times because of you. The houses were all burned down, we're _just now _finishing them up. One of my friends can't even fly now because of your dumb army!" Her voice

cracked slightly at this, the dragon choking back the lump that had formed in her throat. "You broke Toothless's heart." Mistyeyes spat. "And his trust."

For a few minutes, it became silent once more. The waves swallowed up the silence, trying their best to fill it in. But it still pushed down heavily on the pair. Mistyeyes glared sharply over at Nightflight, stare boring into the dragoness's scales. No amount of apology could replace what she had created, Mistyeyes knew that. It would take a miracle for the island to come close to forgive her. And Stoick wasn't exactly the kind of person to 'forgive and forget.' Hiccup might have a reason to trust Nightflight, but the boy had a tendency to get ahead of himself sometimes. Even if he was forgiving to her, that didn't mean the rest of the island would be.

Or what was left of the island, anyway.

"I know." Nightflight said heavily, scarred eyes clouded with misery.

"You know?" Mistyeyes echoed, voice skeptic.

"Yes." She clarified. "For the longest time, I thought that Toothless was in the wrong. That he left me with a broken heart and didn't even care. But I realize now that it was the other way around. I was blinded, and I was stupid." She flashed a look over at Mistyeyes, who stared at her oddly. "If the island doesn't forgive me for my past actions, then I'll just have to find out what to do alone." She shrugged listlessly. "I can't count myself part of the Pack anymore. Not after what I've done to them. I've done terrible things to this place, as well. I can't count myself officially a part of Berk until I am forgiven. Until then I suppose I'm a loner."

The words slipped out before Mistyeyes could stop them. "With good reason."

"I never said it wasn't." Nightflight flashed back, sounding more irritated by now.

Mistyeyes ran out of things to say, ducking her head as she looked away. "I can't say that you're very safe here." She said finally, Nightflight straightening at this. "At least, not while Hiccup is asleep the way he is. He won't be able to protect you like he has been. If the village finds out you're here I don't know what you think that you're prepared to do."

Nightflight only shook her head slowly, shrugging once more.

And that was when Mistyeyes realized her answer. If the village found her here, she would do absolutely nothing. Even if she didn't speak out loud, that much was more than certain. If they came at her with swords and cannons, she would just let herself be killed. Mistyeyes could see it now in the way she stood. She was stooped, tired and worn-out. And blind. If Hiccup was unable to protect her, she would lose all hope of surviving. The fight may have ended on Berk, but for her, it seemed to still be going on. She was fighting a losing battle.

And for now, she was fighting it alone.

Because Mistyeyes didn't know how she could help her.

"Well. I brought you food." She sighed, turning and looking over at the half-eaten pile of fish that she had brought with her. "That's all Berk can spare right now." She said, the words barbed with a slight hint of anger. She waited for Nightflight to snap something back to her, but she just mumbled a small thank-you under her breath as she felt her way over to the food cautiously. Mistyeyes watched her, feeling a flash of sick pity for the dragon as she edged her way forward. Probably being on a large rock that was a good few feet above the ocean wasn't such a good place for the blind dragon.

But there wasn't really any other place that she could be without being seen.

"We'd better resolve this soon." Mistyeyes said flatly, wings stretching out at her sides. She paced away from the other dragon, going over and standing near the edge of the cliff. "The longer we wait, the worse off the result will be, in the end." Nightflight curled her tail tighter to herself, giving a small little shiver at the notion. But she remained quiet, staring at Mistyeyes so intently, that the dragon couldn't help but wonder if she really was blind now. A beat of silence went by, and Mistyeyes flicked her ear, growing restless. "Alright, then. I'll be back later, I guess."

"Thanks, Mistyeyes." Nightflight mumbled, stopping the dragoness right as she was about to lift off into the sky. "It means a lot to me. That you would help meâ€|after everything I've done to you."

"You mean to Berk." Mistyeyes corrected frostily.

But Nightflight just shook her head. "No. Not just to Berk. I mean to you specifically. I never was nice to you. Not while we were growing up, not during this whole thing. I feel like I never took time to understand you. All I knew was thatâ€|Toothless liked you. Andâ€|I liked Toothless." She huffed, almost embarrassed. "You were always better than me, Mistyeyes. No matter what, it always seemed like you were the one that people paid attention to. You were faster than me, more sensible than me." She laughed sadly, shaking her head. "No matter what I did, I always paled in comparison to you."

"That's not true." Mistyeyes growled, voice closing in on itself. "Toothless doesn't love me. The only people his heart belongs to is Hiccupâ€|and you." She blinked, shuffling. "You were always together, I was only there a couple of times. But it's alright. If everything clears up, Toothless will be able to be with you again, andâ€|vice versa." Nightflight tilted her head at this, expression a mask. "Everyone will be happy." Mistyeyes concluded dryly.

"You wont be." Nightflight guessed, voice clipped.

Mistyeyes immediately flared up, blue eyes blazing angrily at once. "Since when do you care?"

Nightflight ducked, refusing to say anything more.

"That's what I thought." Mistyeyes said firmly, anger burning deeply underneath her scales. She huffed shortly, shaking her head from side to side. "You'd better get your thoughts together, Nightflight. We're

all sticking out our neck to help you. We can't keep you safe if you don't know where you're supposed to be." She paused a moment, waiting for Nightflight to contradict her. But the Night Fury remained silent, a piteous expression of depression creased over her face. Mistyeyes shook her head, turning swiftly so she didn't have to waste more time.

The sun was starting to slip down underneath the horizon, she was going to be late. Dragons and people alike would start to know of her absence and wonder where she had gotten herself off to. Or worse, they would come out and start looking for her. That was that last thing that anybody needed. Just in case Nightflight didn't catch the hint, she tossed back over her shoulder: "I'm leaving. I'll come back later to check on you." The words were stiff, and a little angry. But she couldn't seem to control her anger by now. She was too confused to watch herself.

Instead, she turned swiftly, pushing off from the rock face and shooting into the air. The freezing cold wind blasted into her like a wall, trying to blow her back down onto the cliff. But Mistyeyes strained, narrowing her eyes as she pushed on through the heavy winds. She left Nightflight behind as fast as she could manage with the gusts, heading back to Berk with a small frown plastered on her face.

A small squeak echoed behind her, the dragon skidding to an abrupt stop. Her eyes widened at the miniscule yelp, whipping around as her eyes scanned the area behind her. Nothing was there. It was completely empty. "Hello?" She called out, voice being snatched away by the wind. She waited for an answer, heart beating painfully against her ribs. Nobody could see her out here, the whole thing could fall apart if there were any kind of suspicions raised.

But the area looked empty.

A jitter of nerves lanced up her spine, the gray dragon spinning around like a top. She shot away, the renewed sense of fear giving her a flying boost as she shot back towards the direction of Berk. "_Hiccup_" She thought fiercely, screaming inside her head as she raced along the ocean. "_I really hope you know what you're doing! Because I sure don't!_"

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"Come on, you gotta at least try to eat." Astrid urged, blue eyes seeming somewhat pained as she looked at Hiccup. The boy had managed to make it to the Mess Hall with her help, wounds lacing up and down his body stinging with fire as he sat beside the girl. A plate of food lay untouched in front of him, the sight of the meal making his stomach do somersaults. Ludi sat curled up next to him, rubbing her head tenderly against his side every once and a while, the movement making a lash of pain whip around his torso. But he tried not to show it, gritting his teeth together tightly as he held back a cry of pain. He didn't push away Ludi, either. The cat deserved to get back at him for what he had put her through.

Toothless sat with them also. His green eyes bored into Hiccup, but he had stopped pressing the boy for answers. Now all he had in his big eyes was worry and concern. He looked at him human anxiously, letting out a small coo every once in a while. Hiccup flashed the

dragon a wide grin, trying to reassure him that he wasn't going to die spontaneously. But when he looked back down at the food, his smile vanished, the boy reaching up and drawing a hand through his hair roughly, mussing it up.

"I guess I'm just not hungry." He mumbled.

"You've been missing for days." Astrid went on, reaching over and putting her hand gently on his own. "You must be at least a little hungry." Hiccup shook his head, feeling slightly dizzy from the movement. He had to find Mistyeyes. He had to see what was happening with Nightflight. The worry was driving him insane, the boy fidgeting uncomfortably in his chair. Astrid took that the wrong way, snatching her hand back quickly. "Oh, I'm sorry." She said in a rush. "Are you okay? Do you want to go back to the Elder's?" She asked.

Hiccup swallowed a lump in his throat, shaking his head. The Elder wasn't even aware that the two had left. She was probably tearing the whole village apart right now, trying to locate Hiccup. The longer he could stay out and try to find Mistyeyes, the better. But he wasn't going to last all that long, it was looking like. His stomach did flips, his shoulder burning with a wild inferno. "I wanna go for a walk." He decided, immediately regretting his words. But Astrid smiled softly at this, so he figured he was stuck now. His eyes flashed over to Toothless, smiling. The dragon hesitated a heartbeat before returning the gesture with his sloppy beam.

"You sure?" Astrid asked, already getting up.

"Positive. Don't I just look the part of an early-morning jogger?" Hiccup asked sarcastically. Astrid rolled her eyes, putting her hands on her hips as she stood anxiously beside the Viking. He planted his good arm down tightly against the wooden bench, pushing up with a small gasp of surprise. Pain lanced down his side quickly, the teen wincing as he doubled over on himself, almost getting winded by the flash. He'd gotten so comfortable sitting here, he wasn't prepared for the pain for when he got up.

"Hey! You gotta take it easy!" Astrid interjected, reaching over and grabbing Hiccup's good hand tightly in her own. "We don't have to walk if you don't want to. You need to sleep some more." She said, pulling up gently. "Here, Scatterbrain. I'll help you up." Hiccup smiled at the name, changing into a grimace as he forced himself up to his feet. Toothless rushed forward, getting behind Hiccup's back and helping to prop him up. Ludi let out a shrill meow, refusing to be left out as she jumped forward, lancing on Toothless's back expertly. She curled her tail in triumph, grinning smugly as she settled more comfortably on the reptile's scales.

Good job, Ludi.

"You okay?" Astrid asked softly, still clasping his hand in her own by the time he regained his balance. Hiccup sighed, finally finding his footing. He gave a small nod, eye still twitching as his skin pulled uncomfortably. Astrid's eyes roved over his state skeptically, lips pursed. But then she shook her head. "You want to walk around?" She repeated. Hiccup nodded once. She laughed in a huff, "Fine." She giggled. "But let's just take it slow, then. Okay?"

"Slow is good." Hiccup decided, grinning sloppily as he shifted

towards the exit of the Mess Hall. Not a lot of Vikings were in the Hall yet, which was good. Hiccup was too worn-out to try and explain his story to anybody. If his father saw him, he would demand answers from Hiccup that he didn't know fully himself. If he couldn't even explain it to Astrid, who he knew wouldn't judge him all that much, how could he even think about trying to communicating it to his father?

His father.

Hiccup closed his eyes, starting to limp towards the exit of the Hall. He was going to be mad. He was going to be furiously. He'd gone missing for so long, he couldn't take care of himself very well. He wasn't a good Viking, much less a son of the Chief. The thoughts rained down like hard blows against his heart, making his chest ache even more than it had before. Astrid walked closely to him, acting as a safeguard in case he tripped. Her fingers intertwined with his warmly, the girl casting nervous looks over in his direction. Toothless took up the other side, taking the role as a prop as he brushed up against Hiccup. Ludi observed the scene through half-lidded eyes, looking tired and worn-out all of a sudden.

"You're very brave, you know." Astrid murmured, turning and looking over at him. Her blue eyes were raw with sadness as she took in Hiccup's state. "Even if you don't want to talk about what happened yetâ€¦you shouldn't feel bad about whatever it was." Her words surprised Hiccup, the boy blinking rapidly as he searched for something to say. "Whatever it was, you must have been strong to get through it. And you're back now. Nothing else matters."

They were outside now, the sun hidden behind thick gray clouds like it normally was. The air was freezing, the teen's breath furling into little clouds in front of them. It looked like another dreary day in Berk. Go figure. Hiccup crumbled, obviously not comforted by her words as he looked away. He closed his eyes, jaw locking backwards. She won't think the same way when Nightflight was brought into the equation. None of the villagers would.

"Hey!" Astrid snapped, voice tarter than normal. Hiccup perked, turning back and facing her with startled green eyes. The blonde looked at him a little desperately, stopping in her walk as she pulled Hiccup backwards. The boy stopped, dropping his hand from her's and looking at her oddly. Astrid crossed her arms, glaring sharply over at him. "Do you really want me to say it all? Do you still not get it?" She spat, becoming angry. Toothless bristled a little, making a move like he was going to get in between the two. But Ludi, ever the wiser one, let out a sharp hiss, halting the dragon firmly in his steps. Hiccup backtracked a little, bumping nervously into Toothless.

What did he do wrong now?

Astrid was staring at him expectantly. Hiccup realized he was supposed to be answering her question. "Oh. Uhâ€¦I guess not?" He tried, wincing.

Astrid's glare deepened. Her eyes glistened angrily. And that's when Hiccup realized she was crying.

Come on, Thor! Really?!

"You don't get it!" Astrid yelled loudly. Hiccup looked around anxiously, thanking his lucky stars that no other Vikings were outside right now. They were all cooped up inside their new houses, shielding from the weather. Just like Hiccup wished he could do right now. "You don't get that not everything is your fault, okay?" Astrid snapped, getting closer and closer as she went on. Hiccup tried to back up, but Toothless was blocking his way. But suddenly, Astrid stopped, eyes widening a fraction as the anger seemed to melt off. "Hiccupâ€¦I know that beforeâ€¦you and meâ€¦" She trailed off a moment, wringing her hands together worriedly. She closed her eyes. "I wish that I could take back those years when I was so mean to you." She sighed. "If I could change one thing in my life, it would be that. You know that, right?"

"You weren't that mean." Hiccup said in a rush, voice small as he tried to back up again. But that wasn't really true. He remembered one time he had tried to give Astrid a flower that he had picked from the forest. She had, in turn, grabbed it from his hand, threw it on the ground, and jumped up and down on it repeatedly.

So, in a way, he could see where she was coming from.

"But sometimes I think when things like this happen," She gestured around at the rebuilt Village around them. "that all you remember is the time when things were like that. But it's not, Hiccup. Nobody blames you for this, and nobody blames you for whatever happened to you. I might not know what it is, and I might not know why you're so upset over it. And I might never know. But that's okay, because you know what? I don't need to." She reached up, brushing aside her bangs. "Because all I need to know is that you're okay. That's all I care about, Hiccup. Nothing else."

Hiccup blinked, not knowing what else to do besides smile a little it.

Astrid went over, wrapping her arms around him in a soft embrace. She buried her head in his good shoulder, drinking in his presence like her life depended on it. "Nothing else matters except you and me, okay?" She asked. "Don't worry about it. I may not show my feeling a lot of times, Hiccup, but I love you. And seeing you upset makes me feel terrible." Her voice cracked slightly at this, a small tear tracing its way down her cheek.

"Hey." Hiccup said easily, ducking out of her hug and making it so that she was facing him. He reached over, wiping away the watermark on her face. "I'm fine. Look, all smiles, okay?" He prompted, the girl giving him a small smile through her blonde hair. She looked like she wanted to say something else, but Hiccup's eyes softened. "I know." He said, all his bitter feelings washing away like they were in water. He leaned forward, pushing his lips tightly into Astrid's own and ignoring the burn of pain that went through him. Like Astrid said, it didn't matter. Not right now.

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Toothless broke away from the two, coming to the subtle conclusion that they wanted to be alone. Ludi glared sourly at him, as if saying: 'Come on, man. It was just getting good.' But the dragon

ignored her rudely, walking over and sitting down near the edge of the island. The silence was comforting. At least his ears weren't filled with battle cries and screaming. For once, it was perfectly still. All the Vikings and dragons had retired away from the oncoming storm, taking shelter in their homes and curling out for a well-deserved sleep.

He was just debating on whether or not to do that himself, when the silence was broken suddenly.

Shadowclaw tore through the grass, eyes crazy and wild as he skidded to a clumsy halt in front of Toothless. He puffed for air, gasping like a fish out of water. He looked like he had just flown around the Earth twice without pausing for a break. "Shadowclaw?" Toothless asked, tilting his head to the side. He hadn't even noticed the youngling's absence. "How long have you been gone? Hiccup is awake now! You missed him!" Toothless said, a surge of affection washing up inside him as he mentioned the fact that his human was going to be alright.

But Shadowclaw rushed through in his words, not even bothering to ask about Hiccup. "Mistyeeyesâ€¦" He huffed, staggering and stumbling as he tried to speak. "â€¦Saw her leaveâ€¦" He gasped. "I wanted to figure out where she was going. She looked like she wasâ€¦in a big hurry." Toothless narrowed his eyes with confusion, Ludi's eyes widening with a sort of clarity. She started shaking her head rapidly at the younger dragon, but Shadowclaw didn't catch the movement. "I followed her. She went out over there!" He said, nodding over in the direction of some of the cliffs on the edge of Berk. "She didn't see me the whole way."

"What happened?" Toothless demanded, already standing up once more.

"Sheâ€¦she suddenly stopped." Shadowclaw said, eyes round and wide. "She landed on one of the cliffs and started talking. She had a bundle of food that she was carrying, she put it down near the edge." Shadowclaw paused, glancing around hurriedly. Whatever it was, he looked pretty worked up. "There was somebody else there." He said, voice dropping. Toothless stiffened at once, eyes widening as he leaned forward. "She talked to them for a long time, I couldn't really hear what they were saying. I got closer, but she was already starting to leave. She said: 'I'll be back later.' and then left. She's coming back here, back to Berk."

"Who was she with?" Toothless asked.

Shadowclaw didn't answer, only staring at him, confused.

"Shadowclaw, who was she with!" Toothless yelled, voice hardening.

Shadowclaw's eyes bulged. "Nightflight."

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A/N: **When I see your smile**

Tears run down my faceâ€¦

****I can't, replace.****

Guardian Angel - Red Jumpsuits

Such a good song, go search it up~!

Long chapter to make up for the other short one! Hope you like! And I hope you all will review tons too! My goal is meeting the minimum of 600 reviews! Please help! I'd be SO happy if I could reach that number~!

36. Chapter 36

A/N: Alright. SO glad you brought that up, Kappus. It almost slipped my mind.

I WILL be doing more HTTYD stories. I have one trying its best to progress in my head. It's not official, but I'm pretty sure that this will not be my last HTTYD story. I'm almost positive that I will do more. It might not be the one I'm thinking right now, but I know that HTTYD isn't something that I can just pick up a leave :)

Just wanted to clear that up~

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Mistyeyes landed neatly down on the edge of Berk, ears flicking as she perked, blue orbs roving the land around her. The clouds that had hidden her from view had grown to a giant black mass in the sky. The sun that had shone earlier this morning was just a memory right now, the island now turned into a cold, dark place. She let out a cold shiver, watching as her breath furled into a little cloud as she exhaled. Looks like the rain would turn into snow, pretty soon. The dragoness took a once over the village, thanking their lucky stars that the Vikings were able to rebuild homes quickly. Being stuck in a snow storm without shelter would have driven the people over the edge.

It seems as though the Vikings had fled to coop themselves up inside the newly-made houses. Which would be the more sensible thing to do, rather than fly around at high altitudes like she was doing. She let out a short-tempered sigh, unsheathing her claws and digging a small hole in the ground. It didn't do much to release her anger, but it was enough for now. Her blue eyes sparked up once more as she glanced back over her shoulder from where she had come from.

She had to find Hiccupâ€¦for a number of reasons, by now. She had to know he was okay, that was the more pressing matter at hand. But she had to know more about Nightflight, and what had even happened to him in the first place. She had to know what she had do, she was completely at a loss by now. And that small squeak she had heard on her way out from being with Nightflight. She had tried to dismiss it as nothing, but the memory clawed at her mind, forcing its way into her thoughts. She couldn't ignore it, it would drive her crazy.

Even she had no idea what to do.

So what would she do if she had to try and explain it to

someone?

What was Hiccup going to say to the Village, anyway?

Mistyeyes shook her head to clear it, taking in a sharp breath as she forced herself to concentrate and relax. She was creating a scene. Even if nobody was around to see it. She let out a loose sigh, picking herself up quickly and bounding forward. She hadn't been on Berk very long, she was going to be the first to admit that fact. The locations of the buildings sometimes tended to slip her mind, like right now. Now would be a perfect example. She was sure that the Elder's House was at the head of the Villageâ€|right? Or was that Stoick's house? But what if Hiccup was there?

"Mistyeyes!" A loud bark made the dragon freeze, eyes widening to be the size of the clouds overhead. The dragon's mind raced as she came to an abrupt halt, trying to think up excuses in a matter of seconds. Footsteps echoed up behind her, coming closer until they came to a stop. _I was just flying by, I didn't even know that she was there! I didn't want to kill her or anythingâ€|that's why I let her go! I'm still on Berk's side, trust me! Everything is fine! _A million different kind of things she could say flew through her mind, but they were going much too fast for her to try and pin down. "Mistyeyes?" The voice repeated, demanding her attention by now.

The gray dragon winced to herself, but turned, blinking rapidly. But she relaxed at once as she saw Stormfly, the Nadder looking at her oddly where she stood. "Are you alright?" The Nadder asked, tilting her head rather innocently as she examined Mistyeyes. The dragon's frayed wings were buffeted by the harsh winter wind, but she didn't seem to mind all that much. Or if she did, she was very good at not showing it. She stared at Mistyeyes oddly, the Night Fury jumping as she realized that she was supposed to give her friend an answer.

She'd been so fixed on trying to come up with excuses as to what she had been doing, she hadn't expected a friendly visit. And now that she was supposed to actually say something, she came up with a blank. She shook her head roughly to clear it, growling underneath her breath. But then she recovered, straightening noticeably as she grinned widely. "'Am I okay?'" She repeated, laughing nervously. "Of course I'm fine!" Her smile dashed away suddenly, the female leaning forward and looking anxiously at the dragon's broken wings. "It's you that I'm worried about."

"Oh." Stormfly craned her neck, giving a small grimace as she fluttered her wings experimentally. "â€|I'm good over here." She said brightly, turning and dipping her head to Mistyeyes. "It's justâ€|I'm worried, I guess you could say." She sighed, suddenly sounding tired. Mistyeyes cocked her head to side, eyes widening with a hurt kind of concern. She threw a glance over her shoulder, feeling a flash of impatience as she did so. She had to get to Hiccup, now. She had to know what to do aboutâ€|wellâ€|everything. But she snapped angrily at herself, shaking her head. Stormfly was much more important right now.

She turned back to the dragon, worry creasing her voice as she spoke up. "What's wrong?"

"It'sâ€|my wings." Stormfly mumbled softly, eyes flashing as she

turned back to look at the ripped tissue. "They're not going to get any better, Mistyeyes. You and I both know that, just like everyone else does." Mistyeyes's ears flicked backwards sorrowfully, but she did not contradict her. The Nadder went on, as if expecting the Night Fury not to reply. "If I can't flyâ€|Astrid might want to get another dragon. One that can be of use to her." She blinked slowly a heartbeat, turning to look anxiously over at Mistyeyes. The gray dragoness was shocked at the large amount of misery and anguish that were in her yellow orbs. "What if she wants to get rid of me? I have-I have nowhere else to go!"

"Oh, I'm sure she won't get rid of you." The dragon cooed softly, taking a few steps forward and pushing her head against Stormfly's shoulder gently. "Astrid isn't like that, and you know that. She would never let you go just because you can't fly!" She drew back, pasting a happy smile across her muzzle. "After all! Toothless couldn't fly and Hiccup worked around that! The good thing about Berk is that you create a bond with your human. Astrid would never break that bond, not in a million years. You have nothing to worry about, Stormfly."

"Toothless was completely different." Stormfly mumbled. But as Mistyeyes looked closer, she could see a flash of newfound hope in the Nadder's eyes. "He was just missing half of his tailfin. I'm missing all of my wings. There's no changing that." She paused a heartbeat, eyes flickering back and forth as if looking for an answer. Then she perked slightly, looking up at Mistyeyes almost shyly. "You really think she won't get rid of me?"

Mistyeyes straightened, eyes becoming much more darker as she caught sight of movement coming towards them. "Why don't you ask her yourself?" She asked, voice oddly choked as she watched Hiccup and Astrid make their way towards them. Stormfly started with surprise, scurrying over so that she was standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the gray Night Fury. Her eyes dilated with nervousness, but she remained where she was bravely, extending her wings nervously, and showing off her new scars. Astrid quickened her pace as the Nadder did so, dragging Hiccup by the time they caught up to the pair.

The blonde beamed at the sight of them both, blue eyes lighting up like twin suns. "Stormfly! You're out and about!" She said, letting go of Hiccup's hand. She glanced back at him worriedly, making sure that he didn't capsize before she rushed into the embrace of her dragon. "I told you to stay at the house!" She scolded happily, voice breathy with relief at her condition. "I guess that means you're just getting better! That's such good news!" Her eyes flicked back and forth between Hiccup and Stormfly, voice oozing with happiness. "My two favorite people are going to be just fine."

But Hiccup's smile that he had been wearing previously did not increase at her words. Instead, it fell apart on his lips at the sight of Stormfly, emerald eyes widening a small fraction. "What happened?" He asked with surprise, eyes locked on the horizontal rips across the dragon's scales. He limped forward painfully, face creased with fatigue and agony. Mistyeyes dimly wondered how long he had been walking around for. And why he thought that walking around would be a good idea. His skin was so bruised, Mistyeyes had trouble remembering the color he was before. All she could see was black and blue. He had nasty gashes all over him, some fresh, and some looking like potential scars. His bad arm was splintered right against him, the

boy unable to move it at all. And his leg bent at a funny angle whenever he put weight on top of it.

He looked terrible.

But he didn't seem to give a care. He staggered over to Stormfly, green eyes filled with horror as he put his hand softly against the dragon's hide. It was marred with scars, just like Hiccup's skin, the teen slowly raising his arm until he came to the dragon's wings. Stormfly let out a soft moan at this, grimacing as she ducked her head close to her stomach. Hiccup immediately snatched his hand back, backtracking a little nervously. He looked over at Astrid, blinking slowly as he saw the girl's face fall. She looked immensely sad all of a sudden, blue eyes misting over as she looked down to the ground. "It happened in the battleâ€|when the Night Furies attacked us." Astrid explained in a monotone voice. She turned slightly, hugging herself. "A dragon attacked her before any of us could do anythingâ€|he ripped her wings. She's notâ€|going to be able toâ€|" She swallowed thickly, letting out a small sigh. "fly anymore." He finished, as if it were painful.

"She can't-" Hiccup broke off, looking from Stormfly to Astrid. He suddenly looked very sick. "Because of the Night Furies." He said lamely, turning a small shade of green underneath all his bruises. Against herself, and the relief that she experienced as she saw that Hiccup was up once more, she felt a flash of annoyance. She snarled angrily, claws unsheathing and digging into the earth. Both Astrid and Hiccup turned to look at her, Hiccup biting his lower lip with an apologetic look at the dragon. But Mistyeyes was getting tired of this.

"It was all Nightflight's fault!" Mistyeyes snapped, Astrid's eyes getting a tad bigger at the sudden roar. But Hiccup could understand what she was talking about, the teen closing his eyes tightly as he looked away. "I don't understand what's going on, Hiccup! Why can't you just-" She broke off suddenly, ears slamming back against her head as she gasped sharply. "â€|Oh noâ€|" She whispered fervently, blinking rapidly as she took a small step backwards.

Hiccup spun around quickly, looking confused. Astrid cleared her throat, blue eyes narrowing as she kept her hand against Stormfly's nose. She leaned to the side a little bit, looking around Hiccup so that she could see what was going on. She might not be able to listen to what dragons were saying, but she could understand their body language. Something was obviously wrong here. "What'sâ€|?" She trailed off, realizing that she probably wouldn't get an answer.

Her eyes went over to Hiccup, frowning at the sudden look of shock that was settling over the boy's face. She bit her lower lip, deciding that now would not be the best time to ask questions on what was happening. Hiccup was keeping a lot of things from her. But she wasn't going to let that get in her way. He was obviously very upset about something, and the most he needed right now was her. She leaned over quickly, planting a small kiss on Stormfly's nose before walking forward, standing beside Hiccup comfortingly and taking his hand in her own.

Green eyes flashed to blue, and Hiccup let a small smile grace his features.

But it disappeared as soon as he looked forward again, the boy swallowing thickly. Shadowclaw and Toothless were streaking forward, eyes narrowing against the cold wind as they ran straight for the group. Hiccup closed his eyes again, sighing slowly as he braced himself. Something was wrong. He turned back to Mistyeyes, a question on his lips as he looked at her a little accusingly. The dragon shrugged guiltily, a glum frown already on her face. She had known this was coming.

Toothless rushed right past Hiccup, not even pausing to glance over at him. The boy tripped backwards, nearly run over by the absent-minded Night Fury. A flash of hurt went through the teen at the thought of Toothless completely ignoring him, stumbling back into Astrid as he lost his footing. Shadowclaw looked a little bit more focused than Toothless was, turning and looking over sadly at Hiccup. His ears flicked back and forth, tail lashing forward and curling over his feet.

Toothless skidded to a harsh stop right in front of Mistyeyes, the two dragons nose-to-nose with one another. His green eyes were narrowed with fury, teeth grinding together as he let out a low snarl. Hiccup gave Mistyeyes credit; Hiccup knew first-hand how scary it was to be on the other end of the dragon when he was angered. The dragoness did not even flinch at the action, eyes narrowing a little bit as she met his gaze. For a heartbeat, nobody talked, Astrid's eyes round with fear and confusion. But finally, Mistyeyes was first to talk. "What?" She snapped.

"Shadowclaw told me!" Toothless exploded, as if by talking, Mistyeyes had just loaded his cannon. "He told me that you're sheltering Nightflight!" Mistyeyes broke at this, sighing under her breath as she looked away. Her ears flicked guiltily, and Hiccup tried to make a move forward. He had to say something. Now was the time if there ever was one. But as he started forward, Astrid's grip on his hand tightened, causing a shoot of pain to flare up across his side. He let out a small gasp through his teeth, turning back and looking at Astrid accusingly.

But the blonde looked scared.

"Don't." She said, eyes flashing over to the angered Toothless.

"If I had the other half of my tail, I would have gone out there and looked for myself." Toothless spat. "But I can't." Suddenly, that was when Hiccup saw what was wrong with the dragon. Or what was different. The golden switch on his tail wasn't catching what little sunlight was leaking through the dreary clouds. Because there wasn't one. Somehow Toothless's old equipment was back on; somebody else other than Hiccup must have strapped it on the dragon. His red tail with the white skull was back in its normal place. Like nothing had ever happened.

Like it was just like old times.

Hiccup was so overcome, he realized with a shock that his eyes were starting to prick and burn. A stupid smile was on his face, Astrid blinking as she looked at him with a large expression of worry. But Hiccup took a shaky breath, snatching his arm away and taking a few steps forward. "Everybody stop." He said firmly, shoving everything that his father used into his voice. He tried to put as much power as

he could into the words, enough firmness. He could see that Toothless's claws were outstretched, the dragon snarling and snapping at Mistyeyes dangerously. The gray Night Fury jumped backwards, hissing threateningly where she perched. Shadowclaw whimpered in fear, shrinking backwards and pressing up against Ludi. Somehow the cat had managed to get herself into this mess.

Again.

It seemed like things weren't an official problem unless Ludi was involved in some way.

"You'd better explain yourself!" Toothless shouted, ignoring Hiccup still. The teen fumed silently, fisting his hands together at his sides as he tried to get the dragon's attention. But the male wasn't going to be stopped easily. "You can't possibly want to have anything do with her!" He blustered, stumbling over his words. "Look at all the problems that she's caused! She was close to killing Hiccup!" He growled, stalking forward slowly. "I can't lose Hiccup again! Do you not care about the island? Do you not care about Hiccup?" His voice broke slightly at this part.

"Shut up!" Hiccup screamed, deciding that it was the best he could do.

Toothless started with surprise, turning and looking at Hiccup like the boy had just fell from the sky. He opened his mouth to say something, but the teen cut him off shortly. His green eyes flashed, trying to cross his arms. When he realized that he only had one free arm. So he ended up just slapping his hand against his chest a little stupidly. The others stared at him with wide eyes, Astrid making a move to go towards him. But Hiccup swept on before she could do anything.

"I just got up!" He snapped, as if the others had woken him up from a nap. "Can I not get an hour to gather my thoughts before everything starts up again?" Ludi sprang to her paws, letting out a sharp yowl, amber eyes glaring daggers at Toothless. But Hiccup's lip puckered out, shooting a sharp look over to the cat and silencing her quickly. She sat down, flashing an irritated look over to her human. But the teen's eyes were already sweeping over the people gathered in front of him. "I have a lot of things to explain." He said finally.

"That's an understatement." Mistyeyes grumbled bad-temperedly.

"And I'll explain _everything_." He promised. "But all of you need to calm down and keep an open mind!" He gave a pointed look over to Toothless, the dragon ducking his head away as he looked to the ground. Stormfly shifted uneasily where she stood beside her human, having backed up rapidly when Toothless had first stormed up to Mistyeyes. She pushed her head against Astrid's back, whining sadly as she seemed to get the message. They were going to go off and fly somewhere. Where she couldn't follow them.

Astrid frowned, but couldn't very well pay attention. She was focused on Hiccup, eyes clouded with worry and concern as the boy staggered the longer he stood upright. "It might not seem very realistic." Hiccup went on coldly. "And it might seem a little odd. Becauseâ€¦well, because it is." He looked forward, green eyes

suddenly turning sad as he let his gaze rest on each person in front of him. "I don't know what I'm doing to do. I needâ€¦I need help. I already got some." He added, smiling over towards Mistyeyes, who shuffled her paws, embarrassed. "The Village won't believe me if I'm alone. You all are the only people in the village who could help me."

"Help you with what?" Astrid asked. She rushed forward, breaking apart from Stormfly as the dragon soured slightly. She dashed over, grabbing Hiccup's hand worriedly and meeting his troubled eyes with her own. "Are you in trouble?" She asked in a flood of concern. "Hiccup, you know that I'll support you in any way. You believe in that, right?"

Hiccup grinned, the smile not meeting his eyes. "Yes." He said steadily. "Butâ€¦this is much different." He managed, taking his hand away from her and tucking it behind his back. "Just get on Mistyeyes, Astrid." His eyes went over to Toothless's old tail, heart racing a little at the sight of it. He hadn't flown Toothless like that in such a long time, would he remember how it all worked? He shook his head mentally. Of course he would remember. "Shadowclaw, you'll follow." Hiccup instructed.

The youngling still looked a tad overwhelmed, tucking his feet tighter to himself with nervousness. His eyes were wide with fright. "Why would we go back to her?" Shadowclaw squeaked with surprise that almost matched Hiccup's own. How did he know about Nightflight? His eyes went over to Toothless. How did either of them know, for that matter?

Mistyeyes grimaced. "Shadowclaw must have caught me on my way back from her." She explained sadly. "I was being careful enough when I took food to her last." Her eyes hardened, turning and glowering over at Toothless. "I guess he told him." She huffed impatiently. "And I guess Toothless was stupid enough to-"

"Okay, we don't need this." Hiccup said shortly. "Astrid, get on." He said firmly, gesturing over to Mistyeyes.

Astrid looked surprised. "I've never maneuvered a Night Fury beforeâ€¦" She said, taking a small step to the side, closer to Hiccup.

"It's the same as a Nadder. Except maybe a little faster." Hiccup assured her, breaking apart and going over towards Toothless. The Night Fury was still growling in Mistyeyes's direction, Hiccup reached over and poking the dragon's nose firmly. Toothless started at the odd touch, nose wriggling as he went cross-eyed a moment. "It's easier than you think it is. Mistyeyes, go easy on her, will you?" Hiccup said sternly, not giving room for objections.

Mistyeyes rolled her eyes, as if she thought the words to be obvious. She flattened herself down to the ground, blue eyes watching Astrid intently as the girl hoisted herself up. The blonde fidgeted uncomfortably, looking unsure as she settled down onto the scaly back. Mistyeyes's blue orbs flickered over to Toothless as she stood, jaw locking backwards angrily. "Maybe now you'll see that I'm not so much of a traitor." She growled in his direction.

Hiccup strapped himself onto Toothless's saddle, relishing in the

familiar feeling as he snapped his metal leg into its familiar clasp. It felt so right, it was like he had just shaken off a ten-pound weight that had been resting on his shoulders. As soon as he got situated, it lifted considerably, a small grin working its way onto his face, despite their situation. He looked around at the saddle, back towards the red tailfin. A surge of affection went up and choked itself in his throat.

He was home.

"You're impossible."

"You're not trusting!"

"Have I ever told you how annoying you are? Well I'll say it again!"

"I'M annoying? Have you listened to yourself?"

Astrid shot Hiccup a crazed look, looking much more than worried as the two Night Furies shot insults back towards one another. The boy deadpanned, his smile vanishing in an instant. "Stop it!" He snapped, feeling like a father as he whirled around painfully, voice cracking as he let out the yell. "So help me, I will put you both on opposite sides of the island if you don't stop yelling at one another!" Mistyeyes fumed silently, glaring holes into Toothless's scales. The male snorted, rolling his eyes furiously as he jerked his head away.

"Come on, Shadowclaw!" Hiccup yelled, turning to see the brown dragon still curled up.

"I don't want to!" The younger one wailed.

"Shadowclawâ€¦!" Hiccup pinched the bridge of his nose, willing himself patience.

"If you would just use your head once in a while!" Toothless roared suddenly, turning back to Mistyeyes.

"I'm helping Hiccup, you idiot!" She screeched.

"Helping to get him killed! Don't you think he's had enough? Do you care at all?"

"I care more than you do!"

"Oh, that's a laugh!" He roared. "I've known him much longer than you have!"

"That doesn't matter!"

"I just wanna stay here." Shadowclaw sighed, getting to his feet.

Hiccup ducked his head, grinding his teeth together as hard as he could.

Astrid was overwhelmed by now, blue eyes big as the moon as she was jostled back and forth on Mistyeyes's back. They were getting nowhere

with this. And the more than everybody yelled, their cover would be blown. The other Vikings would come outside to see what was the matter. And as soon as Hiccup was spotted, he'd be yanked off from Toothless. They'd lose their chance of leaving the island, and Hiccup wouldn't be able to explain what was going on properly.

Suddenly, there was a loud yowl. Ludi jumped up to Shadowclaw's back, amber eyes shards of ice as she shrieked. Mistyeyes and Toothless quieted at this, swiveling around to stare at the cat oddly. She scrunched up her nose, looking from one dragon to another. She perched on top of Shadowclaw's back, looking high and mighty on her perch. Her eyes held a clear warning in them, a deadly threat hidden in the depths of her gaze. It said all she didn't. "Y'all better stop it, or I'm going to have to have a talk with you." Astrid and Hiccup exchanged looks, but didn't say anything.

The two dragons stopped yelling back and forth, looking at the cat as if she had pulled off her own tail and ate it. She gave a firm nod, settling down more comfortably on to Shadowclaw's back. She leaned over, slapping her paw in rapid bursts onto the youngling's back. As if saying: "Hurry up, Chauffeur. I'm getting tired of this."

Before there could be any other distractions, Hiccup forced himself to talk. "C'mon! We're wasting time! This is important!" He tightened his hold on Toothless, the way he always did before a take-off. The Night Fury's wings shot outwards as he recovered from the odd situation, the dragon flattening himself down as he jumped into the air. Like a miracle, the maneuvers for working the tail rushed into Hiccup's mind as soon as they leapt forward. It was like they were stored neatly in the back of his mind, waiting for the right moment to show themselves once more.

His foot snapped back and forth accordingly as Toothless climbed higher in the sky. The feeling of the familiar movements sent a thrill of happiness up inside of Hiccup. He didn't even register as the others flew up behind him, falling into reluctant ranks as they followed him away from the island. He didn't even register Astrid's glance back at the island, the sadness that poured off the girl in waves as she watched Stormfly get farther and farther away. He didn't notice that Vikings were poking their heads out from their homes.

Nor did he notice the way that his name was suddenly called from down below.

All he could feel was the wind in his hair, the way that his and Toothless's mind seemed to become one as they swiped through the air.

And the painful wracking of nerves in his mind. He knew this was dangerous. It was SO much more than dangerous, actually. He was treading on glass, and if he missed one step, he could start to bleed out. One wrong move—and everything could fall through his fingers. He narrowed his eyes fixedly, a small knot appearing in his stomach as he caught sight of the landmark up ahead. That was the cliff where he had left her.

The dark bulge of the dragon started to show through the clouds overhead, thunder ripping through their silence at the exact moment. Astrid let out a sudden gasp at the noise, Shadowclaw faltering in

his strides as he winced away. Toothless growled sharply, trying to put on more speed. But Hiccup locked his foot backwards, cutting him off before the dragon could do so. "Stop." He said in a small mumble, just barely being heard by the others. He turned back to Astrid, green eyes boring into her own. "You said you would be with me." He reminded her.

"I know." Astrid said uneasily. "but-" She didn't finish, clamping her mouth together with a guilty look. Instead of answering, she turned her eyes back to the front, fright shining in her eyes the closer they got. Toothless snarled, claws gripping at the air, as if trying to attack some unknown enemy. Hiccup leaned forward, pressing his forehead against his dragon's neck, trying his best to be comforting. He wrapped his one arm awkwardly around Toothless's neck, his bad arm pressed irritatingly up against the dragon's scales.

Toothless cooed sadly, torn between anger and sadness. "Relax, Bud." Hiccup urged, sitting back up with a grumble of pain. "Please. Just trust me on this one. I promise. It's more than you think it is." He tried his best to calm his dragon down. Toothless fidgeted, coming to a hover as the group met the edge of the cliff. He glanced back at Hiccup, not speaking a word. But he relaxed as best he could, going forward and landing on the very edge of the stone. The others followed his example, Mistyeyes and Toothless standing as far away as possible from one another. Shadowclaw took up the space in between them, eyes wide with fear and concern as he looked from one adult to another.

Hiccup snapped his leg back out of its hold, turning and slipping off of his Night Fury, starting forward slowly. "Hiccup." Toothless said, voice laced with pain. The boy started, turning around and blinking slowly as green eyes met with green. The dragon looked over Hiccup, looking just as much hurt as if Hiccup's wounds were his own. His bad arm, his wounds, the bruises, the long gash across the boy's forehead—they all seemed to smack the black dragon right in the face. "Please?" He tried, taking a small step forward.

But Hiccup only replied by taking a step back.

Toothless froze, looking hurt as he drew his leg back. The Night Fury that was curled up across from them jerked awake at the sound of voices, head shooting up as eyes lit up with surprise. Toothless started at the sudden movement, but Mistyeyes only closed her eyes. "Hiccup knows what he's doing, Toothless." She said firmly. Her blue eyes flashed, turning and shooting a look in the dragon's direction, making sure that Shadowclaw got a piece of the expression as well. "Are you going to trust him?"

The two blinked, changing their gazes so that they looked at Nightflight.

The dragon had gotten to her feet, eyes troubled as they flickered around wildly, trying to figure out what was going on. Astrid slipped down from Mistyeyes's back, looking a little fazed by the joyride they had gone on. They'd gotten all the way here in less than two minutes; the girl's blonde bangs were blown backwards by the face-full of winds she had gotten. She walked forward slowly, blue eyes narrowed as she stared intently at the dragon in front of them. "She"

"She's the one that started all of this." Hiccup said slowly, green eyes heavy as he looked over to Astrid. The blonde started, immediately backtracking. Memories seemed to fly through her eyes. The way that the dragon had turned Toothless against him, the way that they two had fought her in the cove with rocks. But the boy shook his head quickly, still facing Astrid as he walked backwards, towards Nightflight. "She's the dragon I found so long ago." Hiccup clarified.

"But then—then she's—why?" Astrid fumbled for her words, stumbling mentally as she grasped for words.

"She's changed." Hiccup said firmly, turning around and realizing that he was standing right in front of him. Nightflight was involuntarily shrinking behind him, scarred eyes wide with fright. Her tail rested against Hiccup's leg, as if needed something to hang onto. She looked scared and unsure, she had no idea what was going on. And when Hiccup let his hand rest against her shoulder, he could feel a small tremor go through her. "She helped me get back to Berk." Hiccup said, turning and looking back at the group. "We were attacked by another Night Fury on the way over here. She saved me, Astrid. She wants to be a part of Berk. And I know that she can fit right in. I just have to get people to believe in me." His words shook slightly as he finished, already feeling the skeptical looks on him, and slightly angered ones

Astrid shook her head. "Hiccup—you can't just forget everything she has done."

"I'm not. I'm just saying she deserves another chance."

"You're talking crazy." She snapped. "Vikings aren't exactly the kind of people to take things lightly." She paused a moment, eyes softening. "I know you mean well, Hiccup. But—people have died. People have died from the multiple attacks on Berk, and my dragon can't even fly anymore." Her eyes went over to rest on Nightflight, the girl closing her eyes and sighing. "Hiccup—no—"

"Please, Astrid. Please! I'm begging you to listen to me!" Hiccup pleaded, eyes growing huge. He looked over at Toothless and Shadowclaw, shoulders starting to heave as he caught sight of their expressions. Nobody was agreeing with him on this. "Please!" He said in a rush. "You guys are the only people in the village that could possibly be with me on this! If you aren't—" He trailed off, drawing a blank. He gritted his teeth, inhaling sharply. "I owe her my life! I can't just leave her! She's blind! She can't see! She needs me!"

Astrid shook her head slowly, biting her lower lip. She crossed her arms tightly over her chest. "I've been with you for a lot of things, Hiccup." She said. "But I just can't see this. I can't believe it, and I won't." Mistyeyes's ears flattened to her head, looking down dejectedly at the ground. Ludi snuffed with disappointment, hunching over with a sullen expression. Astrid started to turn around. "Take me back to the village." She said softly. "I don't want to even see that dragon. Ever again."

"Astrid, don't." Hiccup said, vision blurring as desperation clawed inside his stomach.

The blonde looked at him sadly. "I can't believe you would forget everything she's done to you." She paused a heartbeat, suddenly looking hurt. "And me. And everybody. Do I not matter to you anymore?" She glanced around at the others. "Do none of us matter?"

"Of course you do!" Hiccup pressed. "You're my best friends!"

"Then come back with us!" Astrid yelled suddenly. "Leave her! She's not-"

"I can't." Hiccup said firmly. "You don't understand! If you would just listen to me-"

"No!" Astrid snapped. She jabbed a finger over at Nightflight, the dragon stiffening at once. "I refuse to believe that she's changed! You gave her a chance before, Hiccup! And look what happened because of that!" She threw her arms out around her, gesturing to everything around her with a fuming look. Even Mistyeyes nodded slowly at this, blue eyes sorrowful as she looked apologetically at Hiccup.

â€|Was he completely alone here?

Hiccup looked back at Nightflight, swallowing thickly.

Don't do it againâ€|.unless I tell you to.

The words rang in his head, and Hiccup knew that he had to do it. "Nightflight, show them." He said in a rush. The dragon perked, looking over at Hiccup with confusion. "Show them!" He urged, Astrid's eyes widening as she started back over to Mistyeyes. "I know I said not to, but I'm giving you permission!" Astrid started to turn, Hiccup's eyes getting big as she did so. If she wasn't facing Nightflightâ€| "Now!" He yelled in a panic.

Nightflight snapped around to the group in front of her, the dragon narrowing her eyes as she stared straight forward. Astrid's footsteps slowed, as if she suddenly realized something. She slowed down until she wasn't moving at all, body locked up as she stared wide-eyed at Nightflight. The only movement from the girl was the occasional twitch of her hand. Toothless had started to rush forward, the dragon now frozen mid-step. His green eyes were locked with Nightflight's, wide, as if he had realized what the dragon was doing a heartbeat before it was too late to move. Shadowclaw sat on the ground, petrified where he perched.

Only Ludi, Mistyeyes, and Hiccup were untouched. The three exchanged a slow look, as if unsure of what to do.

"You think it will work?" Mistyeyes asked.

Ludi flicked her ear, tail twitching at her sides. She looked pretty hopeful.

That was sarcastic.

"I hope so." Hiccup sighed. "Otherwise we're in a whole bunch of trouble."

The boy turned, shuffling backwards slightly. He leaned down painfully, putting his back against Nightflight's side.

He sat down neatly on the ground.

And he waited.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: SORRY IF THIS IS RUSHED I GOTTA GO LIKE RIGHT NOW!

GOODBYE I LOVE YOU ALL!

MAYBE THIS CHAPTER DESERVES 600 REVIEWS!?

SORRY FOR ANY TYPOS. IM IN A BIG-BUTT RUSH RIGHT NOW.

MY ARMS HURT FROM TYPING SO FAST.

37. Chapter 37

A/N: I was going to do something funny for this author's note, because usually that's what I do, right? But, I figured that this one should be rather serious. Thank you guys _so _much for all the reviews; it means so much to me that I could acquire such a big number from less than forty chapters. I know that I hit a bump in the road and considered dropping this story. And when I came back, I expected nobody to still be watching for it. But you all stuck around and waited for me, and that means just so much. I can't even begin to explain my elation upon seeing that big number on my story. I am so proud. Thank you.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Astrid couldn't move; her limbs were locked together tightly with a freezing cold feeling, the blonde only being able to let out a small whimper. She couldn't look away from the dragon's eyes, no matter which way she tried to twist. The scenery around her started to melt away like wax, the girl's blue eyes desperately trying to tear away from the stare boring into her, back over to Hiccup. Where was he? Was he okay? Or was something going on that she couldn't see? What was going on? Hiccup wouldn't be able to defend himself in the state that he was in! He needed her!

She could see her Viking standing off to the side out of the corner of her eye. The boy was staring at her desperately, slowly getting shorter and shorter. Was he falling, or was he just sitting down? Maybe ducking? Astrid couldn't tell, her vision immediately turning dark right before she heard the Viking mumble: "I hope so. Otherwise we're in a whole bunch of trouble." He sounded sorrowful, miserable and depressed. Something was defiantly wrong. Astrid tried to call out, but her voice stuck in her throat. Her eyes bored into the dragon's, and before she could do anything else, her mind exploded into a flash of pure green light.

She staggered from the sudden burst of glow, hand flying up to the side of her head as it throbbed in pain. The girl closed her eyes tightly, seeing light yellow spots dance behind her eye-lids as she waited for her head to stop rolling. When she finally became

grounded, the girl's blue eyes blinked themselves open once more, though she instantly found herself regretting the action. She perked, finding herself on some sort of island, the darkness of night having obliterated the warm feeling of daytime. The blonde gasped sharply, turning around to try and find out where she was.

But she still couldn't move.

She opened her mouth, trying to cry out for help, though she wasn't sure how it would come to her. She didn't know the islands off the back of her hand like Fishlegs did; she only knew the ones around Berk. If she didn't know where she was, how would help come? But her throat blocked her windpipe at once, making it impossible for the Viking to say anything at all.

Panic threatened to rise up into her face, the feeling clawing rapidly at her heart as it tried to overcome her body. But suddenly, the scene changed, the pounding noise of rain drumming against her eardrums. Hiccup stood in front of her, looking ragged and beaten. His green eyes were shadowed over by his bangs, the boy not being able to see her. Astrid tried to jerk forward at the sight of him, alarmed at his new state. But she was still rooted to the now-muddy ground. She could only stare desperately over at the person she loved, unable to help him.

The Night Fury from before was standing in front of him, the wounds across her eyes looking more garish and nasty; it looked like the wounds were fresher. She was staring at Hiccup tiredly, as if she were worn-out. Astrid could hear the barking of dogs in the background of the pouring weather, distant, but close enough to worry about. As if on instinct, the Night Fury started to lean forward towards where Hiccup stood, claws unsheathing and digging into the ground. But she stopped herself from dashing forward at the last minute.

Hiccup looked up finally, but his green eyes went right through Astrid. He wasn't even fazed by her appearance, making it feel like she wasn't even there. But for the first time, Astrid wondered whether or not that was the truth of the matter. The boy's green eyes burned with pain both mentally and physically, but his voice was strong as he started to speak. "I was alone, too." He said fixedly, the dragon looking at him dubiously. "Everybody hated me. My own father did, actually. No joke." He hesitated a heartbeat before inching a little closer to the dragoness. Astrid tensed, expecting the Night Fury to leap for the boy's throat right as he came near. But she only stared back at him, as if waiting for him to go on. It surprised Astrid at how much pain there was in her eyes, too. Almost as much as there was in Hiccup's, it seemed.

Hiccup stopped a few inches away from her. He met her -â€|sightless?-gaze for a moment before ducking his head close to his chest. "No friendsâ€|no acquaintances. You could count the guy I worked with, but he would never be as close to me as I wanted somebody to be. And I thought that was my fate, my only road. To be alone and sad and miserable." Astrid bit her lower lip, feeling a tug on her heart and a sting in her eyes. Hiccup never talked about what things were like before Toothless changed his life. He never showed any signs of resentment, or grudges held against others. But it seemed like ever since this whole mess with the other dragons had started, he'd been thinking back to it a lot.

And that just made Astrid feel all the more guilty.

The scenery changed once more, spinning in a tight circle around her, colors blurring into new shapes. When it finally subsided, Astrid could see the dragon and Hiccup once more. Except Hiccup was crouching behind her, eyes wild with fright as he tried to cover up Ludi. The wild dogs that Astrid had heard before were now encircling the trio, snarling and barking with threatening growls. Nightflight had taken up a defensive stance, ears slicked back to her head as she snarled.

But her vision was too badly damaged. The Night Fury's head snapped back and forth with confusion, trying to pinpoint the nearest attacker. "Your left!" He shouted, a dog from the side suddenly dashing in to try and land a blow on the dragon. Nightflight reacted at once, spinning around and catching the dog on the ear, claws digging into its skin and throwing him across the clearing. It vanished into the thicket of the trees, yelping with pain. The dragon straightened, eyes gleaming with the small triumph. Hiccup's eyes widened with shock at the move, but a delighted smile slowly crept up across his lips.

The boy's voice echoed over Astrid's head, the girl unable to turn behind her and see what was happening. "And thenâ€|Toothless came into my life. He showed me that there was so much MORE. He showed me what I wasâ€|blind to. And because of that, I'm a whole different person now."

It changed once more. Astrid finding herself inches away from Nightflight, the dragon's teeth bared into an ugly snarl as she growled under her breath. Farther ahead, Astrid could barely see Hiccup, the boy curled up on his side. His eyes were screwed shut tightly; he looked to be asleep. Ludi was curled underneath him, but her eyes were wide open as she stared in the direction of Nightflight. A fit of barking broke out behind Astrid, paws thrumming across the slushy ground and echoing over to where she stood. Nightflight sucked in a deep breath, roaring out an earth-shaking roar in reply. Her wings splayed out threateningly, the dragoness tilting her head back and shooting up a beam of purple fire into the night sky. There was a whimper, then the stepping of paws as the dogs retreated.

Slowly, Astrid's eyes widened. She was protecting them?

"If you just let meâ€|I can show you what you're missing."

She was on a cliff, the girl's blue eyes wide with shock as Nightflight threw herself onto Hiccup, dragging him away from a rouge Night Fury and hovering over him protectively.

"I can be the one to shed light on the subject."

She was back where she had started, mind swamped with questions and confusion. She watched with a new kind of lump in her throat as Hiccup crouched down to the ground with a pained grimace. He looked up at Nightflight, reaching out with his arm and extending it forward. He stopped a few inches from her face, ducking his head and closing his eyes. "Nothing will ever hurt you again. I promise."

And Astrid watched with amazement as Nightflight pressed her nose against his palm.

She stumbled backwards, movement flooding back through her body in a millisecond. She gasped sharply, air catching in her throat painfully as she did so. She felt herself falling, the girl too astonished by what just happened to try and catch herself. She remembered something that Hiccup had said a long time ago, back when Toothless had gone away from Berk. _The female always used to give this weird-looking stare to Toothless, and then he would get all weird. That was right before he started to hate me. I don't think it's a coincidence. _Hiccup had been right about that; did Nightflight do something to Astrid too? Was that was it was?

She could feel air whistling around her, could feel her feet start to meet the edge of the cliff. Terror clutched at her heart, and she opened her mouth to scream. But suddenly, there was a tight pressure on one of her arms, the girl being pulled upwards and back to safety. Her mind finally cleared, sensible thinking flooding back through her mind as she found her legs. She stood more firmly, staggering away from the cliff shakily as she gasped for air. Hiccup held on to her hand with his good arm, eyes wide as he searched the girl's face. He had a slight wince on his face, as if he was waiting for the blonde to punch him across the face. Or turn around and shove him off the cliff. Or kick him repeatedly and make sure that he'd never be able to have kids ever in his life.

Granted, those thoughts were indeed going through her head.

But she reached over, grabbing Hiccup and pulling him as close as close as physically possible. The boy choked, Astrid using all her strength in the firm embrace. And she had a lot of strength. Her eyes closed tightly, teeth grinding together painfully. "I'm so sorry." She sighed loosely, voice breathy and a little raspy. "I hadâ€|no ideaâ€|" Her blue eyes cracked open, going over to Nightflight slowly. "â€|did all that really happen?" She asked, drawing away from Hiccup and looking him over with a new, very concerned, look.

The deep gouges on the boy's wrist were marks from the dogs that Astrid had seen attacking them, as well as the ones that had been on his chest and shoulders. The new skinniness from the boy was from being marooned on that rainy island, which she was sure even Fishlegs didn't know about. The gash on his cheek came from the other dragon that Nightflight had saved him from, the wounds and bruises littering his body from the fight that had followed. He was so hurt. But it looked like Nightflight had saved him from any more injuries. Or possibly evenâ€|death.

The word caused a chill in Astrid's spine as she tried to think of Berk without Hiccup.

"When are you going to realize that I'm smarter than I look?" Hiccup teased.

But the light glow that had started to kindle in Hiccup's eyes switched off suddenly. The boy turned, gaze switching from the blonde as he turned back over to Toothless. The Night Fury looked stunned, blinking rapidly as if to clear his mind. He looked at Nightflight like he had just noticed she was there, stiff as a board and as quiet as one. Shadowclaw's eyes were narrowed with thought and confliction,

eyes looking through every inch of the dragoness, trying to find something to help him come to a conclusion. Mistyeyes shuffled her feet nervously, blue eyes glinting anxiously. As if to prove what everyone had just seen, Ludi picked herself up, turning elegantly and leaping up onto the dragon's back. Nightflight didn't even blink at the new weight, twisting around to make sure that the cat was on securely.

Finally, Toothless spoke.

"Was that true?" He demanded. His eyes had a certain quality to them, like the look that a piece of prey got as it was cornered. He remembered the way that Nightflight used to be with her powers, and the memories obviously still haunted him. His eyes were hollow now as he looked at her, emotions warring inside his large orbs as he fought to get a handle on the situation. Nightflight flinched at his voice, cringing away violently.

Hiccup stepped forward, saving her from having to reply. "Yes." He replied, Astrid looking a little more confused as he responded to the dragon. Toothless turned, green eyes growing round with worry as they landed on his rider. "Nightflight has changed, guys." He said, putting emphasis on the word. "She deserves a second chanceâ€¦which is just what Berk has for her." Nobody said anything, the doubt and tension in the air more than obvious. Hiccup sighed. "I owe her my life." He added. "I can't just send her out to fend for herself. She'd never make it alone."

Toothless's ears flicked back, looking over to Nightflight and taking in her eyes carefully.

"Ludi blinded her before we got to that island you saw." Hiccup explained, skipping over the part in the woods where Nightflight took him away. That point was irrelevant. "She can fly only when somebody is telling her how or where she needs to go. Kind of like somebody else being her eyes." He looked in turn to everybody around him. "She can't attack on her own, and she can't run very far or very fast. She's handicapped, and without somewhere to stay, she'll have little to no chance of surviving."

"The others will never accept her." Astrid said, though her eyes seemed to be a little softer.

"Then we have to make them." Hiccup replied firmly. "I'm not just going to give up on her so easily. Remember, Vikings used to be attacked by dragons all the time; we forgave them pretty easily." He said, Astrid twitched oddly at the word 'easily.'

But she merely sighed. "Hiccup, that was entirely different. The dragons had no control over it."

"We can make it look like it was the same thing." Hiccup pressed. "Besides," He turned around, looking back at Nightflight and narrowing his eyes thoughtfully. He tilted his head, lips slightly pursed as he gauged the dragoness fully. "The others might not even recognize her from before. If we don't say anything, I'm sure nobody else will. They'll just think it's a coincidence." He smiled, head swiveling back to Astrid triumphantly.

But the girl was looking at him like he had just said the stupidest

thing in the world. "You can't seriously think that, can you?" She asked, laughing slightly. "The whole village was in an uproar when she was here last. I think they would remember the only other Night Fury ever brought to this island by you. I doubt that they would be so clueless as to forget her face. Especially your father." She added as an afterthought.

Hiccup deflated noticeably at this, a frown pulling his lips down into a glum frown. Mistyeyes nodded over in the direction of Astrid, as if agreeing with her. Toothless still looked caught off-guard, eyes wide and round as he looked at Nightflight. The dragoness was hunched, eyes downcast as she fixed her eyes firmly on the ground. But her tail lashed back and forth anxiously, painfully aware of the male's eyes trained on her. Mistyeyes replied to this by merely rolling her eyes dismissively.

"Lookâ€¦I get what you're talking about." Astrid sighed finally, Hiccup perking at once. "But." She went on, his face becoming grouchy once more. "It'll take a lot to persuade everyone about this. I don't even think it'll work if you show themâ€¦whatever just happened." Astrid said, trying not to linger on the event. It still made her dizzy to think about. "They'd take that just as another way of her trying to take over or something. We need to go forward carefully, otherwise we'll just be digging our own graves here."

"Too late." Hiccup sighed.

"I mean any _deeper._" Astrid snapped.

Mistyeyes blinked, getting side-tracked from the two teens' conversation as she looked over to Toothless. Glancing back at the humans, she pushed herself up to her feet, bounding over and coming to a neat stop beside the male dragon. She fixed him with a stern look, blue eyes expectant as they met his green ones. "Well?" She prompted, a little tartly. He looked away uncomfortably, changing his stare between Mistyeyes and Nightflight. The gray dragon rolled her eyes impatiently. "I _think _that you owe _somebody _here an apology." She snapped.

Toothless let out an embarrassed sigh, looking at Mistyeyes the way a grown-up would look at a pestering child. But the expression soon melted as he gave a small nod. "You're right." He huffed, drawing his tail tighter to himself. He tried to ignore the stare that she gave him in return. The: 'You're Darn Right I'm Right, You Stupid Excuse for a Dragon' stare. "I jumped to conclusions too soon. Althoughâ€¦I might still reserve some." He added, glancing over to Nightflight.

"It seems like all you're going these days is apologizing." Mistyeyes sighed airily.

"I guess it's because I make it too easy." He grumbled ungraciously.

The gray Night Fury did not reply, though. Instead, she turned her stare over to Nightflight, unconsciously getting a little softer at the sight of the pitiful dragon. "Well?" She demanded, forcing a little of her old hostility into her voice. She had no idea why, it just seemed like it was getting harder and harder to hate her. Which was something that Mistyeyes hated, in turn. Nightflight looked over

in the direction of her voice, not exactly looking in her exact position; her eyes stared through the air right beside her. Mistyeyes blinked rapidly as she sidled over to where the green eyes had landed, feeling a little better as she did so. She cleared her throat, "Are you going to say anything at all, or are you just going to sit there and not say anything?"

Nightflight didn't open her mouth.

"You're just making it worse for yourself." Mistyeyes growled thickly.

"Am I?" She rasped, voice oddly weighted down.

Toothless's eyes narrowed. "Tch." He clicked. "You just did thatâ€|that _thing_ with your eyes." He accused. "Obviously you haven't changed much." He reached up, rubbing an arm roughly across his face as he spoke. Like he was trying to wipe away a stain that Nightflight had left on him. But if the dragon caught the movement, she gave no heed. She only flicked her ear wearily, shuffling a little where she sat.

It was clear that she was uncomfortable without sight to guide her. Her paws kept sliding forward every so often, as if to make sure that the cliff wasn't crumbling underneath her. Her pale green eyes kept flickering around wildly, blinking a million times a minute, like she was trying to clear her eyesight. Every time that her tail would whisk over the edge of the cliff, she gave a small jolt, like she was surprised. All in all, saying she was a little jumpy would be a very severe understatement.

But she managed to get herself under control for the time being. She whipped her head around to Toothless, eyes landing dead-on the dragon this time. Mistyeyes wondered why the reason for that is, immediately flushing with embarrassment at the flash of jealousy that came with the thought. "I promised Hiccup that I would not do it anymore. Unless he told me to. And as you can remember, he was the one who told me to do it in the first place." She sniffed disdainfully. "I'd never do it if he told me not to."

Toothless looked at her oddly. "How come you changed your mind so suddenly?" He asked, voice suspicious.

"I know who I am now." Nightflight said coldly, turning her blind eyes away from the dragon. "Can you say the same for yourself?"

"How dare you!" Toothless flamed. "Of course Iâ€|knowâ€|" He said, ears flattening as he slowly trailed off. He turned, craning his neck backwards and down to his old red tail. His eyes flashed sadly at the sight of it, Mistyeyes's shoulders hunching at the sight. He looked confused for a heartbeat, mouth ajar as he searched for something to say in reply. Then he turned with a disgruntled look, giving a small shake of his head. "You expect me to give you a second chance." He murmured finally. He stared down at the rock between his feet, not even blinking. "Youâ€|Mistyeyesâ€|Hiccupâ€|even Astrid, now." He slowly looked up, eyes glistening with painful memories as he looked at the old enemy. "Everybody is ready to give you another chance. Butâ€|Nightflightâ€|I'm not sure I can do the same."

Mistyeyes braced herself to charge forward, preparing to jump forward

in Toothless's defense. But Nightflight only nodded once in reply. "I'm sorry." She said, sounding genuine. "I'm sorry you feel that way. And it isn't uncalled for. At all." She shuffled her feet closer to herself, giving a small, aimless shrug. "I understand."

Toothless's mouth went slack once more. "It's not even you anymore!" He mumbled, almost to himself.

Again. That stupid, rash feeling of jealousy. It clawed deep into Mistyeyes, the gray female digging her claws into the rock face painfully. Her eyes stung as she looked between the two, feeling herself start to bristle. Shadowclaw noticed this, eyes widening with a sudden realization as his eyes flickered from Mistyeyes and then back to Nightflight. It dawned on him in a sudden rush, the youngling's eyes widening to resemble dinner plates. But Mistyeyes didn't even try to pay attention.

She turned quickly, getting to her feet and stalking back over to Astrid and Hiccup. The blonde straightened at her new behavior, a crease appearing in her forehead as she saw the female. "You okay, girl?" She asked warmly, reaching over and placing a hand comfortingly on the Night Fury's nose. Mistyeyes huffed out a snort, hoping that it would suffice for a reply. But as she saw Hiccup's suspicious look, she realized that it probably wouldn't.

Astrid came to her rescue first. "We have to tell Stoick." She said simply.

Hiccup immediately groaned, reaching up with his good hand and using it to smack himself in the head. "He'll be furious." He sighed ruefully.

"Most likely." Astrid replied, very chipper. Hiccup immediately glared over at her rather dramatically, expression souring in ten seconds flat. The blonde waved him off, rolling her blue eyes swiftly. "But he'll be the one that the villagers will listen to." She pointed out. "He's the leader of Berk. If we can get him to see the light in this whole mess, then I'm sure that he can get the others behind him as well. It only makes sense."

"Except for the 'see the light' part." Hiccup growled.

"I'll help you." She offered, reaching over and taking his hand down off of his forehead. She gave a small smile to him, but it vanished as she looked over to Nightflight. "But you'll have to tell me everything." She amended. "I can't help you if I don't know the whole story. And, Hiccup!" She paused a moment. "I can't tell you how this is all going to turn out. It actually sounds a lot like a suicide mission from where I'm standing. I'm only helping you because you won't shut up about it if I don't. Otherwise I'd have left."

"Right." Hiccup said briskly, snatching his hand away with a roll of his eyes.

Astrid crossed her arms, looking thoughtful. "We have to figure out what to say to your dad." She sighed, sounding tired and worn-out. "It'll take a whole lot of evidence to get somebody like Stoick the Vast to change his mind. Evidence and time." She flicked her head to

the side, her bangs tucking themselves behind her ear with the movement. Her blue eyes flashed with both irritation and dread. "It isn't going to be easy. At all."

"But we'll do it." Hiccup said, sounding grimly sure of himself.

Astrid stepped forward, giving Hiccup another hug, this one much more gentle than the last as he minded his injuries. "I'm glad you're okay, though." She said fervently. She drew back slightly so that she could look at him. Her blue eyes flashed with a playful sort of light. "I always wonder how you can get so passionate about things." She said finally. "And why they're always impossible to do."

Hiccup grinned sloppily. "I like to aim high."

She rolled her eyes, but leaned forward to press her lips tightly against his.

Mistyeyes's ears flattened sorrowfully, blue eyes flickering away from the sight and over to Toothless and Nightflight. The two were staring at one another intently, having formulated a small, quiet argument, it looked like. But neither of the two seemed very angry. They were like two officials fighting over which would be a better way to contribute to Berk, or at least something along the lines of that. They both took turns pointing something out; the other would reply fairly to the question and then ask their own. They were a proper distance away from one another, no emotions in their voices whatsoever. They were probably talking over important events that had happened; Mistyeyes was most likely missing important points by being so far away.

But she couldn't bring herself to go back over.

She knew it was stupid, it was beyond stupid. And way past idiotic. A petty love triangle was the least of their worries right now, and yet it the most pressing thing on her mind. Why couldn't she be more like Astrid? Or maybe more like Hiccup? Their relationship was perfect. It was natural. It wasn't bumpy with arguments, or riddled with glares. It wasn't barred away by questions and it wasn't closed off by uncertainty. It was smooth, beautiful, fun, and deeply meaningful all at the same time.

She felt so whiny as the question came into her mind. She felt like a youngling that didn't get what she wanted, throwing a tantrum in response to try and achieve it. Why can't I just have that? She asked herself silently, eyed boring into Toothless's back. But he didn't even notice her, too fixated on the conversation he was having with Nightflight. Why can't I just have one day where everything doesn't fall apart?

She huffed angrily, revising her question. Why can't I have one minute where everything doesn't fall apart?

Ever since she had first seen Toothless come back to the Pack's Island, she had known something would go wrong.

But she had never imagined it would turn out so wrong.

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A/N: From March 11th, there will be an absence of updates for two weeks. I'll be spending Spring Break computer-free and chowing down over at Disney, and then right after that boarding a cruise ship. So I'll be a little stranded in the middle of the ocean ;)

So I'm sorry. If I have time before I leave at 4:00 in the morning on Monday, I'll try to update this story. Because I'm kinda not okay with this chapter. I'd feel a little sad in leaving you all with this one in reply to me reaching 600 reviews. It's a really good chapter, but I feel like you all deserve more considering we finally reached that beautiful number!

Seriously, guys, I love you. SO much. Thank you once again. ^^

38. Chapter 38

A/N: Okay, I sincerely hope that I will get this out. I leave in three days, so it's now or never.

BTW: I know my version of the Elder is a lot different than she really is. For one, sheâ€|.talks. XDD But I feel like this version of her is a little better. I'm trying to bring a little bit more of well-deserved life to this character that doesn't really have a large role at all :)

Let's do this business .

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

"Idiots! I'm surrounded by idiots, that's what this is!" The Elder howled with fury, more or less slapping new bandages onto Hiccup as the boy tensed with sharp pain. "I leave for a total of ten minutes to check on other people, and when I come back, I see that you've already gone out and zipped around on your dragon! You were bored, hmm? You wanted a little bit of fun before I could come back and catch you out and about?" Hiccup opened his mouth to reply, but the Elder swept on before he could even start. She reached out, literally smacking another layer of gauze around the gash on Hiccup's forehead. The Viking let out a small gasp, and yet she didn't let up. "Well, how fun do you think it will be when you bleed out all over the island!" She demanded. "I'm sure it'll be a bunch of excitement when you find yourself dead!"

"I've said that I'm-

"Sorry doesn't cut it, kid!" The Elder snapped, ducking her head and concentrating a moment as she grappled a loop of bandages around the boy's wrists. She muttered crossly to herself, things like 'stupid moves' and 'risky situations.' Astrid stood off to the side, looking a shade between nervous and amused as she crossed her arms over her chest. Her blue eyes were trained fixedly on him, drinking in the boy as if she were making sure that he wouldn't burst into flames spontaneously. Hiccup had tried to shoot her an irritated look, but he couldn't bring himself to do anything of the sort. Instead, he gave her a little grin, trying to assure her as much as he could with the one expression.

He tried to say: 'It's alright. I'm fine. Stop worrying. It'll all

work out.'

But when he realized that he might be actually lying to her, he lost the power to do it.

Mistyeyes and Toothless crowded around the window outside, eyes round with unspoken questions. They looked nearly as frantic as Astrid, maybe even a little bit more. Hiccup could tell that they wouldn't be able to sit still for much longer; he had been in here for much more time than he should have. The moment that they had landed on Berk, Hiccup could see the large wave of Vikings rolling down the hill, preparing to tackle the boy down and demand answers to questions. Hiccup had sat on top of Toothless, Astrid mounted neatly on Mistyeyes's back.

He had immediately spotted his father in the crowd, near the back. The two locked gazes, and thinking back to it now, the queasiness twisting his stomach into knots must have shown in his eyes. His father looked at him anxiouslyâ€|lookingâ€|worried. Scared. Relieved. And as soon as those emotions registered inside of Hiccup's head, he immediately wanted to just crawl into a corner and die. His father was worried about him. He cared where his son had gone, and he was ecstatic to find that he had come back in one piece and gotten out and about.

And Hiccup was just going to screw up all those emotions with what he was going to have to say.

He was actually thanking his lucky stars that the Elder had gotten to him before anybody else had, which was usually the opposite of what most everybody in the village felt in relation to the woman. But at least this way, he couldn't be accused to avoiding stares and conversations. You can't really stop and chat as a raging old woman is slapping you with her cane and shoving you up the hill yelling very foul language. Well, you could. But Hiccup doubted that the decision would be preferred.

So he'd managed to avoid everybody for now. But he wouldn't be able to keep up this tactic in a few minutes. It had turned dark outside, the torches that were lit when the stars came out over the island had been set on fire, the flickering orange lights reflecting their way through the window. It gave off oddly-shaped shadows throughout the room, making it seem oddly eerie and serene inside. The place had been rid of most of the Vikings by now, no doubt both from recovery and haste to get away from the place.

The Elder spoke up, sounding much more controlled than she had before. At least she stopped slapping him. She echoed what he had been thinking, though much less bothered by the fact than Hiccup had been. "Dinner will start soon." She sighed tiredly. "You can go off and visit with everybody; I'm sure that they'll be anxious to hear every detail of your 'adventure.'" She eyed the boy as she spoke, and that's when Hiccup realized that she must know. She knew that he would rather not talk about it, why else would she not question the events that led up to his injuries?

Her eyes flashed for a moment, and Hiccup blinked rapidly as he realized that it was a small glint of affection. Which wasâ€|unheard of. Especially when it came to the Elder. The Elder was somebody that you tried to avoid at all costs; if you had to be in the same room as

her, you were titled as: 'Suffering Through It.' And that wasn't just about the injuries you most likely had. Or the sickness you were going through. Sure, the Elder was respected; she was held up high in the air and people came to her once or twice for quick little pieces of advice. But there was a big difference between respect and appreciation. She was usually more sour than a lemon, ready to snap out at people and decapitate them if they put one foot out of place.

So for her to look at Hiccup without even a flash of annoyance—that was enough to stun the Viking. But he guessed that if there had to be anybody for the Elder to get to know, it would be him. He seemed to be in this place every other day back before he knew Toothless. Whether it was from an accident in the Smithy, or just a random accident, (which happened a lot to him) he figured that by now, he should know the Elder better than he did. He felt a flash of remorse at the thought of this, realizing that without this woman, he'd probably be dead.

He would have died multiple times without her.

He gave her a smile in return, Astrid's eyes lighting up with a sort of surprise. "Sorry." Hiccup improvised quickly, voice taking on a more sheepish tone. "I guess I wasn't thinking." He winced as the old woman rubbed a stinging juice into his shoulder, cringing away from the sharp prickling feeling that spread through his joints. But it only lasted a heartbeat, a cooling feeling rushing through him after a moment to replace the burn. He gave a small sigh, relishing the feeling that he had nearly forgotten. "I'll be more careful." He said, sincerely hoping that she would say what he was hoping for.

Which she did.

The Elder gave a hum of agreement, the affection getting dimmer and dimmer as she tried to cover it up. "Yes, well, be sure to do that. You can go frolic off with your pals, but be back here right when you're finished. You're not recovered enough for me to leave you to your own devices. I know that much now, at least." Hiccup silently cheered, feeling a wave of relief smash into him at a million miles an hour. That meant that he didn't have to go home.

If the Elder noticed his change in emotions, she didn't show it. She merely stood off to the side, gesturing him to the side and out the door. After a heartbeat, she turned, retreating back into her study as she began to do basic chores. "Don't take long." She warned, throwing a glance back over at the two Vikings before returning to counting out her herbs. "Otherwise you'll make me have to come back down and get you." She glared over sharply at the two, warning them. "You both do not want that."

"We'll be quick." Astrid promised swiftly, grabbing Hiccup's hand and yanking the boy up to his feet. Hiccup winced at the sharp motion, the fresh bandages he was wrapped in scratching at his skin as he moved. But he recovered quickly as he saw Toothless and Mistyeyes start to fall over each other towards the entrance of the home. The boy sighed inwardly, realizing that if he didn't get outside soon, they would trample themselves to death. Still clinging to Astrid's hand and throwing one look back at the Elder, he turned and went outside.

The cold Berk wind immediately blasted right into Hiccup's skinny frame, the boy nearly being toppled over by the gust. Astrid threw out her hands to try and catch him, but Hiccup found his footing on his own. He staggered a heartbeat, putting weight on his bad foot with a grimace. But his head cleared quickly, the boy's green eyes narrowing against the hard breeze as he looked down towards the Mess Hall. People were already streaming into the grand building, voices and yelling reaching the pair's ears from where they stood.

"Are you ready?" Astrid asked, blue eyes clouded with worry as she looked over to him.

Mistyeyes and Toothless bounded over to the two, Toothless leaning down and nosing his new bandages with a satisfied sigh. He purred loudly, pressing his head against Hiccup's. The boy could feel the dragon trembling beside him, and Hiccup let a small frown grace his features. The Night Fury must be more than beside himself. He was being forced to make a decision between being with Hiccup and yet having to watch him potentially be in danger. The boy lifted his hand, patting Toothless's nose softly and giving him a small grin.

The Night Fury leaned back, sitting beside Mistyeyes, who was oddly not looking over at the dragon. Toothless looked a little bit better when he saw Hiccup re-bandaged, but he still looked anxious. His wings twitched ever so often at his sides, the Night Fury shuffling his feet on the grass that was just starting to grow back from the fire. Hiccup looked at Mistyeyes carefully, trying to guess what she was thinking. But the gray Night Fury just gave him a quick smile, odd mood quickly evaporating as the two met eyes.

"You don't have to do it, you know." Astrid said suddenly, fishing Hiccup's attention back to her. He turned, green eyes clashing with blue. The blonde squeezed his hand tightly, tilting her head to the side. "We can wait a little bit longer, this is only your first time back with the others." She nodded over to the Mess Hall, angling her gaze in its direction. "You can have this, you know. You don't have to bring up this whole mess tonight."

Hiccup had told her most of what had happened on the way back to Berk. He had started from bringing Toothless back to him with the handprint, all the up to Nightflight saving him from Fleetfoot. The tale seemed short when he told it, it didn't feel like an ordeal that had been going on for months on end. It sounded like one of those fairy tales that mothers told their children to keep them from being too selfish or losing sight of what was really important. Even if he had skipped over some key parts of the situation. Such as the fact that he could hear dragons now.

Hiccup was reminded of a time that he had gone fishing with his father when he was littler. Or the two had tried to go fishing. His father had loaded all the fish they had caught (HE had caught) into one box, and he had told Hiccup to let him open it, and to stay away from it. Hiccup, of course, had not listened. Or had not paid enough attention to it as he should have. His father's back was turned, and Hiccup had managed to finally catch a small little minnow. He turned, ready to call out to his father excitedly and proclaim his victory. But Stoick was busy wrangling with a much bigger fish, grunting and pulling as he tried to snap it back to the bay. Hiccup (being so

clever) figured that he might as well just put his fish with the others. So he had turned, snapping the lock off of the caught-box and readied himself to dump his catch inside and shut it quickly.

He hadn't gotten a chance. The box was nearly packed to the brim, and the sight of flopping fish had frightened him out of his boots. The boy gasped sharply, falling backwards and kicking out his legs to try and catch himself. He swung his legs a little too far, kicking the box and watching with horror as their clean fish were swamped over with mud. His father had been furious, raging and fuming as he had to pick up as much fish as he could.

The moral of that story: don't open up a box unless you're prepared to see through the outcome.

He hadn't been ready back then.

He sure as Thor's underpants wasn't ready now.

"Yeah, maybe." He consented, albeit grudgingly. "But I don't know. Usually when I get my hopes up, the opposite happens." Astrid smiled a little bit at this, but nodded once. The girl started forward, Hiccup walking closely behind her as the two made for the Hall. Mistyeyes and Toothless brought up the rear, Shadowclaw and Ludi in front of them. It was like a little parade of the only people who carried a secret.

Shadowclaw was usually as eccentric as Ludi was, at times. The Night Fury and cat had formed an odd sort of friendship that most girls in the village 'awwwwed' at. But it seemed that even Shadowclaw was scared straight by this new plot-twist, the brown dragon humming underneath his breath as he scanned the sky. His green eyes were careful and calculating, and he didn't even bat an eye when Ludi tried to weave around underneath his paws to trip him up. He merely stepped over her carefully, too busy in his own thoughts to bother with her. Looking back on it, Hiccup wondered how the male had gotten so mature. He still had his 'kiddie moments' but for the past few weeks, he'd been a little bit more keen and sharp than he usually was.

Ludi huffed angrily at his lack of attention, lips curling up into a frustrated snarl as she fell back behind the Night Fury. He didn't even notice the feline leave his side. Ludi turned over to Hiccup, blinking widely at him. She seemed to shriek: 'Are you even seeing this?' Hiccup smiled warmly, shaking his head down to her and rolling his eyes. Toothless snorted, one wing uncurling and stretching down to the ground. Ludi blinked, one ear going flat as he looked up at him with confusion. Toothless jerked his head, eyes inviting. The cat's tail whisked happily into the air, gathering underneath herself for a moment before launching herself into the air. She landed neatly onto Toothless's back, lowering herself down and curling up tidily on the dragon's scales.

Mistyeyes giggled a little bit, eyes softening at the sight. "You like handing out piggy back rides, then?" She mused.

Hiccup blinked, eyes flickering over to the two as his interest piqued.

Astrid watched him, eyes thoughtful as she judged his

reaction.

Mistyeyes had seemed so closed-off back by the Elder's home. Hiccup wondered dimly what she had been so upset over, if she even was bothered. It must have been his imagination. Or she had just pushed aside her feelings so that she could deal with the task at hand. The first of the two would have been much more preferred, but Hiccup figured it was probably the latter. He didn't want this group to fall apart; they only had one another, and if there were doubts and fights, it would all fall apart. And Mistyeyes was his friend, if something was wrong, he wanted to know what it was.

He reminded himself to ask her what was wrong later. When Astrid wasn't around.

"Yeah, right." Toothless snorted, rolling his eyes dismissively. "I just wanted her to stop growling."

"Ah." Mistyeyes smiled. "That must be it."

Toothless glanced over at her, tilting his head to the side suddenly. His eyes flashed and he looked a little bit edgy. "Are you okay?" He asked, echoing Hiccup's own thoughts as he spoke. The boy was fixed on them, trying to be subtle as he watched out of the corner of his eye. Mistyeyes blanched, surprised by the question as she fumbled slightly.

"O-Of course I am." She managed finally. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"Are you sure?" Toothless asked, looking back angrily to Ludi, who kept shifting. "You don't seem like you are."

"Can't you tell I'm fine?" She demanded, fuming.

"No. Not really." Toothless said simply, blinking slowly.

"Hey, guys!" Shadowclaw intercepted, doubling back and standing in between the two. Mistyeyes looked a cross between relieved and angry, gratefully changing her look away from Toothless and down to Shadowclaw. Toothless remained staring at her for a moment before shaking his head, as if giving up. His eyes flickered down to Shadowclaw, ears flicking back and forth expectantly. The brown Night Fury kneaded his paws against the ground, head swiveling over towards the edge of the island. "Let's go down to the beach and fish!" He suggested, looking anxious to get the two talking about a different subject. "That way we can eat while Hiccup and Astrid are."

Toothless looked a little torn at the idea. His green eyes went over to train themselves onto Hiccup, a small whine forming in the back of his throat. Mistyeyes shrugged at it, though. "I'm sure that it'll be fine." She said breezily; she must have been talking at Toothless. "We can be up and back with our food before Hiccup and Astrid can even get inside the Hall." Hiccup turned, realizing with a jolt that they were closer than he had first thought to the dining area. It loomed over the rise, the glow of its torches reaching them and casting large shadows on the grass.

"Are you sure about that?" Toothless asked sarcastically, looking over at Mistyeyes a little condescendingly.

Mistyeyes soured at this, wings trembling crossly at her sides.

Hiccup spoke up, glancing over at Astrid carefully as he spoke. "Hey, why don't you guys go fish down by the beach?" He asked, echoing Shadowclaw to try and bend around the situation. The trio looked over at him with a little confusion, before catching on after a moment. "We're going into the Mess Hall; it can get pretty crowded most times. You guys will probably be cramped." He gave a shrug with his good shoulder. "You'll be done by the time we are. You guys just go ahead, we'll be fine."

Toothless still looked skeptical, but Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes seemed comforted. Shadowclaw shot to his feet, crowing something about knowing the best fishing spot before starting to race off. Mistyeyes started after, blinking as she realized that Toothless wasn't following. She turned, blue eyes glinting as she looked him up and down. The dragon was staring at Hiccup with worry, ears slicked back to his head as he shuffled his feet with concern. "Hey, Toothless!" She yipped, snatching the Night Fury's attention back to her. She turned the way that Shadowclaw had fled, lashing her tail back and forth with a small glint as she bunched her muscles. "I bet I can race you there!"

The black dragon looked at her a little despairingly. Hiccup shook his head from side to side, "Toothless, I'll be fine." He pressed. "You go on ahead. I won't do anything too stupid while you're gone." He promised, hoping that the promise would turn out to be truthful. Toothless seemed to think along the same lines, eyeing him closely for a moment. But then he sighed, shoulders going loose as he realized that fighting it would probably be pointless.

He gave a small nod before whipping around, taking up Mistyeyes on her offer as he shot off. The gray dragon yelped at the sudden shoot-off. Her blue eyes went wide, gray wings splaying out at her sides as she squeaked with shock. But then she growled, claws unsheathing as she pushed off the ground. She leapt into the air, barreling through the wind as she flashed by Toothless. The Night Fury increased his strides after her. "Hey! That's cheating!" He howled.

"Do they hate each other, orâ€¦?" Astrid trailed off, eyebrows raised.

"I think it's a love-hate relationship." Hiccup commented, starting towards the large building once more.

Astrid smiled, the torchlight making her eyes sparkle. "I guess we both know that feeling."

"Pft." Hiccup rolled his eyes, shaking his head. "Ours was a hate-DOUBLE HATE relationship."

"Good point." Astrid sighed, the two stopping in sync as they stood in front of the double doors. Astrid craned her neck, looking up to the top of the Hall with a small frown. Her blue eyes were calculating, and finally, she backtracked, pulling Hiccup back down the stairs as the Viking fumbled with confusion. The blonde pulled him back around the building, behind a bush that was just now starting

to grow back from the fires. Hiccup fixed her with an odd look, one eyebrow tilting up.

"You know this isn't the way to get inside." Hiccup pointed out fairly.

"I know that." Astrid sighed tartly, finally letting go of his hand. She pointed over to where they had stood a moment before. "I don't want you in there." She said, Hiccup twitching at the words. But she went on, ignoring the reaction for the time being. "We need to figure out what we're going to do, and right now, we have no idea. Not everybody will listen to you as well as I did." The boy shrugged at this, nodding reasonably. "Soâ€¦I'll just go in, get food, and then come back out. You justâ€¦wait here."

"I love sitting behind bushes." Hiccup sighed sarcastically. At Astrid's put-out look, Hiccup quickly put his hands up in a surrender. "But you're right, you're right. I never said you were wrong." She relaxed more at this, hands slipping down to rest back at her sides. "I guess I'll justâ€¦go back to Elder's house." Hiccup offered, glancing back the way they had come. "And, maybe you should bring something back for her too. It'd be nice."

"â€¦Sure." Astrid said. "I'll just have to learn to juggle before I go."

The blonde turned, glancing around a few heartbeats before rounding the corner and walking up the steps. The slam of a door signaled her leave, and Hiccup hit his wrists repeatedly against his sides as he realized that he was all alone. His hair buffeted every which way in the wind, and Hiccup could hear a small rumble of thunder in the distance. The night suddenly seemed really big and dark, Hiccup small in comparison to his shadow. He'd never been technically afraid of the dark, but at times like this, he suddenly found himself yearning for daytime.

He leaned against the wall of the Hall, blinking sadly at the voices of happy people that leaked through the walls. He could hear the clattering of plates, friends greeting each other, and he could have sworn he heard Snotlout shouting his own name at the top of his lungs. It was just like a regular night at Berk, and Hiccup suddenly found himself wanting to be apart of it. But he shook his head quickly, getting off from the wall and turning around pointedly. He had a tough situation at hand to think about, he couldn't get sidetracked.

He started back a little slower than he had come, eyes downcast as they fixed themselves on the ground. His feet dragged tiredly as he walked, the boy wincing every so often as he put weight on his bad foot. He supposed that he should have thanked Astrid a bit more for her plan. He probably wouldn't have been able to hold his own plate, his shoulder was still infected. He tried to rotate it experimentally, only making it halfway around before grimacing away from the pain. He still had a long way to go to be fully recovered and functional.

And he had no idea what would happen if he found himself in danger.

He was halfway to the Elder's house, when suddenly he became aware of

something else behind him. Footsteps. They were a long way off, but they were slowly getting closer and closer to him. The boy froze for a moment, limbs locking together tightly as his breath caught in his throat. His wild mind immediately flew to the worst possible things that could be hiding in the shadows. A stray Night Fury that had been missed. Somebody that had seen Nightflight. Alvin. It even went as far to think about ghosts that were rumored to be floating around the tallest hills of Berk.

But what he got was much worse.

"Hiccup!" The boy turned slowly, cursing himself a million times over with every step. Stoick approached him wearily, the shadows throwing weird shapes all over his father. "There ya are." He said a little awkwardly, Hiccup still stiff as a board as he looked up at him. _Stupid! You're an idiot! Come on! Really?! You're that dumb!? I'm a little surprised! _He yelled at himself over and over, screaming mentally as he just grinned tensely at his dad. "I saw ye a little while ago, I didn't get to catch ye." Stoick went on when Hiccup didn't say anything. "Glad to see youâ€¦to see you up." He managed.

He looked at Hiccup expectantly, and the teen immediately launched himself forward, knowing he had to reply. "Oh! Yeah! I'm- I'm fine. Yeahâ€¦I was a littleâ€¦uhâ€¦busy before." He grinned painfully, rubbing his bad shoulder out of a nervous habit. The movement caused flashes of pain to lance all across his limb, but he pushed it away roughly. "Uh- Astrid is just getting my food for me, and the Elder kinda wanted me back! Soâ€¦I think I'll justâ€¦go nowâ€¦" He murmured, voice getting quieter and quieter as he started to walk backwards.

"Son, are you alright?" Stoick asked suddenly, Hiccup stopping in the words. His green eyes flashed, the boy wincing a little visibly. His father went on, eyes narrowed as he watched his son. "You look a littleâ€¦worse off than you normally are."

"Well, that would indeed make sense." Hiccup offered weakly.

Stoick was not amused. He only looked at his son a little sternly.

Hiccup slowly let his guard down, closing his eyes and hanging his head. He looked down at the ground, feeling his chest constrict at the impossible situation he was in now. There wasn't anybody left outside to come to his rescue, they were all inside the Mess Hall busy eating and laughing. From the noise that was going on in there, it would probably take Astrid a while to get food. He could try and stall until she could come out and make up an excuse (which he was severely lacking in ideas for). But he had a feeling that his father wouldn't let him avoid the situation for that long.

"Uhâ€¦I gottaâ€¦talk to youâ€¦." He mumbled uncomfortably, glancing over behind Stoick towards the Hall. No sign of Astrid.

Stoick raised his eyebrows, crossing his arms over his chest. His expression of concern and awkwardness slowly hardened to the mask that he usually wore whenever he was around Hiccup. The thought made the boy scowl mentally, but he did his best to shrug it off. Instead, he wrung his hands together in front of him, desperately groping for

absolutely anything to say. He hadn't expected this, and right now, he was instantly regretting not spending more time with the half-grown bush. "It's about those other Night Furies that were here." Hiccup started, taking a deep, shaky breath. Stoick's eyes narrowed at this, and Hiccup could feel his heart ramming painfully against his ribcage.

Desperately, he started to talk quicker, trying to douse out his father's anger before it could come to a blaze. "It's just thatâ€¦maybe they're not as bad as we thought! Not all of them!" He pressed, sweeping on before Stoick even had a moment to interject. "I mean- think about it! The- The dragons that are on Berk now had attacked it before! They went after us just the Night Furies had! And now they're perfectly fine here! I was thinking that maybe the same could go for them." He said, ending in a small wince.

Stoick blanched a moment, looking too shocked and angry to speak. A different kind of emotion crawled over his father's face; Hiccup tried not to remember the last time he had worn that expression. "Hiccup, do you not know the number of Vikings that were _killed _from those monsters?" He demanded, Hiccup closing his eyes and sighing through his nose. "We only have half the number of people we did at the start of the season!"

"But the dragons here now did the same thing before-" Hiccup flashed back.

"The dragons that are on Berk now were attacking for food." Stoick corrected him, wearing a look that said You-Should-Know-This. "They came for food, and they left when you got it. Those Night Furies were not looking for any kind of food. They came here just for the point of killing Vikings! The dragons here now having nothing in common with those Night Furies, son."

"But if you would just listen!" He pleaded. "You'll be able to-"

"Hiccup, I'm done with this conversation." Stoick said flatly.

"Well I'm not!" Hiccup snapped, hands balling into fists at his sides. Astrid was still inside the Hall, probably just not getting to the food. There was nobody else in the clearing around, and Hiccup suddenly would have rather had the Elder come out and smack him with her cane. He'd take anything over this, right about now. "I've been able to see that they're not so bad! They can be _changed _Dad, just like the other dragons were! We can have more Night Furies here! Think of how protected we'd be! We could-"

"You've been able to _see_?" Stoick repeated, flaring up.

Hiccup's mouth hung open a moment, at a loss for words as he blinked rapidly. "Uh- yes?" He said. He backtracked rapidly, shaking his head. "I meanâ€¦I've been able to keepâ€¦a sortaâ€¦_close _eye on one." He said. "I-"

"How close?" Stoick asked coldly.

"Close enough." Hiccup retorted. "And I know that she isn't as bad as we thought she was."

"She." Stoick growled. "You mean that one Night Fury you first brought back? The one that nearly killed you? And took Toothless away from Berk? And then nearly killed you again?"

"â€¦Yes?" Hiccup said, voice soft.

"Hiccup." Stoick pinched the bridge of his nose, willing himself patience. "You're obviously confused." He said. Hiccup could tell how much effort it took to put that much concern in his voice. Hiccup deadpanned at his father, feeling anger rise up to his face as he was pushed aside. "You should just go back to the Elder's house and just stay there. You're-"

"I'm not confused!" Hiccup yelled. "That was were I was this entire time!" Stoick blinked, dropping his arm as he looked at Hiccup with widened eyes. "I was with that Night Fury! I got to know her more, she's changed! She's not leading the other Night Furies, Dad! She wants to be apart of Berk! And if a Night Fury with her pastâ€¦could-could come to terms with these things so easily, so could the others! Why don't you see that?"

"_Leading the other Night Furies_?" Stoick thundered, Hiccup's heart freezing over at the mistake he'd just made. His green eyes widened, and he took a small step backwards. But Stoick closed the distance easily. "You mean to tell me that the dragon that was here before was the same one controlling the Raids?" He demanded. Hiccup cursed his luck mentally. The one moment his dad can be smart and put two-and-two together, it was something like this. "And she took you?" He added as an after-thought, fuming.

"No!" Hiccup said quickly. "I meanâ€¦yeah. She picked me up while I was alone in the woods, she took me to this island after she crash-landed in the water! She's blind now, Dad! She can't see! She can only move and fly when somebody is there to tell her what she needs to do! She wont be able to last two minutes out there alone! She needs me! Just like Toothless did!"

Stoick suddenly jerked forward, hand flying out and clapping onto Hiccup's bad shoulder. The boy sucked in a sharp breath, staggering from the pain that rushed through him. But the Chief slid his arm down, revealing the tight bandages underneath the boy's tunic. The once-white wrappings were now dyed a light pink. Hiccup hadn't even noticed that it was bleeding again. "Did she do this?" Stoick demanded, voice low and angry.

"Yeah." Hiccup said, wincing as he remembered the claws that had buried themselves into his skin. "But she isn't like that anymore. You aren't listen-"

"Where is she now?" Stoick growled, taking his hand back and glaring sternly down to his son.

Hiccup met his father's glare for a moment before snapping his head away, glowering down at the ground. He kept his mouth clamped shut tightly, refusing to speak.

"Hiccup!" Stoick yelled, the boy jumping slightly. "Vikings have died because of this dragon! As Chief, I'm responsible for the safety of everybody here. You should learn that lesson before it's too late!" He snapped, Hiccup flaring at the accusation. He remembered when his

father had said he'd make a great Chief one day. Was that just flattery, then? He gritted his teeth, still remaining silent. Stoick growled angrily. "She's a danger, Hiccup. She can't be allowed to be around Berk. What if she's just waiting for the others so she can attack again?"

"That won't happen." Hiccup growled through clenched teeth.

"Where is she?" Stoick said, ignoring him.

"I'm not telling you." He said firmly.

Stoick drew back, eyes narrowed and burning as he took in the full state of his son. "She's close, isn't she?" Stoick asked, noting how Hiccup seemed to freeze at this. "I saw you and Astrid fly away from the island. You were back within the hour. And you wouldn't look at me when you came back." Hiccup wanted to bash his head in with a rock. His dad was able to be fooled all the way up until it actually mattered. Stoick turned, looking in the direction that Hiccup had landed on the island a few hours ago. His eyes were narrowed, a plan seeming to form in their depths.

"Dad, no. Come on." Hiccup said desperately. "Haven't I shown you that I know more than you think I do?" He asked. "She's willing to be apart of Berk! We'd be unstoppable with more Night Furies! We would never have to worry about attacks from Pirates, or Alvin!"

"And at what risk?" Stoick snapped. "I'm not wasting any more lives, Hiccup!"

_You wouldn't be! _Hiccup thought fiercely. But he knew that if he voiced the thought, it would do him no good. "You can't kill her." He said instead. "We've gone so far to jut go back to killing dragons! You must know that at least!"

"Hiccup, I want you to go back to the house." Stoick said flatly. He turned back, going back towards the direction of the Mess Hall. "And I want you to _stay _there."

But Hiccup suddenly felt a flash of white-hot anger. His hands fisted tightly, nails digging themselves into his injured skin. But the sharp beat of pain only fueled his anger. He'd gone through so much, he had done so much work. He was _not _going to quit now. "No." He said clearly.

Stoick turned, one eyebrow raised. "What?" He asked, tone sharp as thorns.

"I said no." Hiccup spat. "I'm not letting you kill her."

Stoick bristled, puffing up to be twice his size, it looked like. His face colored red with anger as he looked at his son, and Hiccup slowly felt his heart start to sink with hopelessness. If the other Vikings were going to go after Nightflight, he would be severely outnumbered. That, coupled with the fact that he had no idea what to do from now, he was pretty much at a loss. He expected his father to just turn and leave him like he always did, pushing Hiccup out of his mind like he was an annoying kid that just needed a time-out. But his father must have realized some of what he said was true. He was going to try and stop him.

Stoick turned, grabbing Hiccup's arm and pulling the boy forward. Hiccup grunted with surprise, trying to dig his heels into the ground as his father pulled him along. "Dad, you're making a big mistake!" He yelled, trying to raise his voice as loud as he could. "Come on, Astrid! What's taking you so long? Can't you hear me?" "She deserves a second chance! Everyone does!" He realized with a jolt that his father wasn't taking him back to the Elder's house, he was taking him back to his own house. It was coming up fast; if he was going to change his dad's mind, it was going to have to be now. "If you don't give out second chances, I might as well just leave right now!" He twisted, bad arm bending painfully as he cringed. "Is that what you want?" He demanded.

Stoick didn't answer. They reached the door of their home, the Chief throwing it open with a loud slam as he turned swiftly, going up the stairs. Hiccup staggered as he tried to keep up, his prosthetic leg making it difficult to run after his dad. "Please, you aren't-" He broke off angrily, tripping over a step as he fell onto the second level of their home. "If you would-" Hiccup couldn't even finish a sentence. Stoick opened the door to Hiccup's room, pushing the teen inside a little too roughly.

Hiccup managed to catch himself before he could topple over, whipping around and looking over at his dad pleadingly. He opened his mouth to say something, but his father beat him to it. "I know that you might think that this isn't the best way to do things." He said, hand on the boy's doorknob. Hiccup's gaze hardened at this, biting his lower lip as hard as he could. "But this is what has to be done. I cannot risk any more Vikings. It would just be best for the Night Fury to be gone."

"You don't know what you're doing." Hiccup said brokenly. He turned so that his back was facing his father, the boy closing his eyes and ducking his head. "Why can't you just listen to me?"

Stoick did not answer. For a moment, it was completely silent. Hiccup started to turn, feeling a small surge of hope at the thought of his father changing his mind. But finally, he broke the silence, crushing Hiccup's heart as he did so. "Stay in here until I tell you to." He said simply. Hiccup's shoulders hunched, the boy not replying. His father sighed softly, the sound barely audible to the boy. But then the door slammed, and Hiccup was alone. The scraping of a chair sounded through the door, and Hiccup figured that his exit was now blocked.

He stood there for a moment, listening as his father's footsteps went quickly down the stairs, the front door shutting with an echo that reverberated throughout the house. He waited five seconds ten. He was completely still, unmoving as a statue. But then he snapped into motion, falling forward and ramming his face down as hard as he could into his pillow. He sucked in a deep breath of air, screaming as loud and as long as he could into the thing. When he screamed his throat hoarse, he straightened, whirling around and throwing his pillow into the wall. It flattened itself against the wood, falling down to the ground in a heap of feathers.

"You never listen!" Hiccup yelled, voice cracking. "Why do you always wait to see that I'm right when it's too late?" He shouted. His hands shook with anger, the boy reaching up onto his bookshelf and shoving

a pile of books down to the ground with multiple slams. His hands went up to his head, digging his nails deep his temples. "I just wish that for once you would actually remember that I'm not stupid!" He howled, kicking one of the books against the wall. "â€|don't you remember anything that happened?" He asked softly, suddenly more tired than anything as he leaned against his wall.

He sat down, knees drawn up to his chest as he rested his head down. His eyes flickered up to the hole in his roof, over where Toothless usually slept. The clouds that had scudded across the sky were now a dark mass, obscuring the light from the stars and leaving the night dark. Determination settled in the boy's eyes as he pushed himself up to his feet. "You're not going to get away that easily." He said firmly, eyes fixed on the hole. He'd find a way out.

He turned around, eyes scanning the ground. He landed on the messy pile of books on the ground. Eyes narrowed, the boy pushed forward, reaching out and grabbing as many books he could. He pushed them over, stacking them on top of Toothless's slab of rock carefully so that they formed a sort of staircase. There weren't that many to reach the window (he wished he had that many), but he'd just have to find something else, then. He didn't know how fast his dad was moving; their house was right beside the Great Hall, after all. He could already be there.

But hopefully it would take them a while to find Nightflight. After all, they only knew where she was in accordance to the spot that Hiccup had landed hours ago. Nevertheless, Hiccup wasn't going to let them lay a finger on Nightflight. The two of them had made a pact. He had promised her a million times over that she would be safe with him. And he intended to keep that promise, no matter what happened.

It didn't matter how fast they went.

Because Hiccup was going to be faster.

(~***~) (~***~) (~***~) (~***~)

A/N: **You didn't ask for thisâ€|nobody ever wouldâ€|**

Caught in the middle of this dysfunctionâ€|

It's your sad reality. It's your messed-up family tree.

And now you're left with all these questionsâ€|

Family Tree - Matthew West

That's my favorite song as of right now~! I love it so much. And it fits Hiccup and Stoick so wellâ€|

Realized a little too late that this is a bad way to leave y'all for two weeks XD

I'M SO SORRY!

What with this new copy/paste chapters thing on this site, I COULD try and type out a chapter while I'm on the plane or something. But that would be SO hard. So I'll only do that if I get a butt load of

reviews. Pardon my French~

So this is the last update. I'm leaving for the trip tomorrow, and in between packing for everything, buying new stuff, and running around like a crazy person, I managed to type out this last chapter :3

Tell me how you liked it~! I tried to stick by the book and movie as much as possible. I searched up a million pictures of Hiccup's room on Google images to make sure that I had it right. I put in the HTTYD movie and rewatched all the arguments between Hiccup and Stoick. All in all, this chapter swallowed a LOT of time lol

So tell me how I did~! ;D

(BTW: That little box story comes from the phrase: I'm not opening that Can of Worms. My dad says that to me all the time, so I wanted to put it in here. I tweaked it a little bit so it could fix. Hopefully that was good, too!)

39. Chapter 39

A/N: I'm back from the cruise! You all are so happy to see me. I know you are. O-o

I wanted to get a chapter out to you all, but the plane we were on wouldn't let me get onto wifi. And I can't really type out a chapter while I'm going up the hill on Splash Mountain. But THANKS SO MUCH for all the reviews I got! I love you all so much! I was on a DreamWorks cruise! So I got to go to a meet and greet with Stoick and Gobber~. No Hiccup though. He was only in the parade at the end of the cruise. How stupid is that? I sniped a bunch of pictures of him though while he danced around! I'm like: "HA. YOU THINK YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH AVOIDING ME SO EASILY? NAY NAY NAY."

(*ITALICS FOR DRAGONS MEANS ASTRID CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE SAYING.*)

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Astrid stood stiffly in the sloppily-created line that stretched out in front of her. She gripped the three plates she had scooped up tightly in her hands, her knuckles bleached white from the force. Her blue eyes were narrowed into furious slits, teeth clamped tightly together as she prayed to Thor for patience. The group behind her was made up of the teens on the island; Ruffnut, Tuffnut, Fishlegs, and Snotlout were all gathered around her, and that didn't really help you if you had a headache already. Ruffnut and Tuffnut were both trying to see if they could shoot a rock into Gobber's mouth with their slingshot without him noticing; so far all they had accomplished was knocking a small girl across the forehead with a flying projectile. They were quite proud of themselves.

Fishlegs was talking about Meatlug, and how his poor dragon was still recovering from her claw breaking during the last Raid. Astrid flared at this, remembering Stormfly and her new, ripped-apart, wings. But she managed to hold her tongue for the moment, standing rigid and angry as Snotlout drawled on about useless things. She shuffled along in line, silently fuming as the others followed her along like she was the head of a conga line. "Hey, Astrid." Snotlout said, ignoring

her as she rolled her eyes. "I was thinking maybe after we get done eating, we can go and ride around on Hookfang." His eyes glinted proudly as he drew himself up importantly. "He _is _the best Monstrous Nightmare out there."

"Right." Astrid sighed tiredly, finally getting to the food service. The Viking that was designated as cook stood wearily behind the stone counter-top, looking tired. Astrid managed to give him a small smile as he plopped down some meat onto the three plates she was balancing precariously on her arms. It wasn't as big as it normally was, in fact, Astrid's hand was bigger than the slices on the plates. But that was something to be expected, Astrid guessed sadly. With the village burned the way it was, it was no wonder that the food would be lost along with the buildings and neat little streets. Turning away and continuing along in line, Astrid shot a look over in Snotlout's direction. "Sorry, Snotlout. I have plans. And I wouldn't suggest you ride him again. You might set the village on fire like last time."

Snotlout gave an angered grumble, crossing his arms over his chest tightly. "You set fire to a few meadows and people never let you forget about it." He snarled under his breath.

"Hey, I have a question." Tuffnut said suddenly, lowering his slingshot to his side as he looked over at Astrid. The blonde sighed through her nose, turning her gaze over to him. _Of course you do. _she thought to herself. The boy pointed from one plate to another, forehead creased as he counted them aloud. "How come you have so much stuff?" He asked, a grin forming on his plate. "Are one of them for me?" He demanded excitedly.

"Hey, if he gets one, I want one!" Snotlout exclaimed.

"And then that leaves one for me!" Ruffnut said firmly.

"No. No. And no!" Astrid snapped, losing what little patience she had before. "One is for me, the other is for Hiccup, and the last one is for the Elder. Now if you all will please let me finish getting my food that I came here for, I would _greatly _appreciate it!" Her blue eyes blazed with sharp anger, her jaw locked backwards as she glared at the quartet in front of her. They looked at her with wide eyes, mouths set into thin lines as they blinked rapidly. Astrid held their gazes, still going along with the line as she glowered over in their general direction.

"Hey, Astrid." Snotlout said, being the first to speak.

The blonde sighed heavily, shoulders drooping as she gave up. "What?" She asked.

He wagged his eyebrows up and down, giving her a small wink. "I'm naked under my clothes."

"Oh, Thor." Astrid cursed. "I swear, if you weren't-"

"Attention!" A booming voice suddenly rang throughout the Mess Hall, all of the chatter and yelling that had been going on before now coming to a halt. Voices tapered off in the middle of their stories, children stopped racing around, and mourners looked up from the table, eyes glistening in the light. Stoick stood at the head of the

hall, all eyes going over to rest on the Chief. Astrid started with surprise, immediately anxious at the look on the man's face. He held a battle axe tightly in his right hand, and a fiery look in his eyes. Astrid shifted uncomfortably, paranoid mind immediately starting to launch itself into rapid thoughts.

Something was wrong.

Stoick waited until everybody had quieted down, Astrid swore that if a pencil dropped in the Hall, it would echo for forever. She bit her lower lip, the silence making the scene all the more frightening. Desperately, she looked over towards the doors that led out of the Mess Hall, trying to see if she could spot Hiccup. Was he okay? Something on Stoick's face was rubbing her the wrong way. He looked upset and angry. She could only remember the last time that he had walked around with that look on his face. And by the small murmurings starting around her, Astrid could tell that the others were thinking the same thing as she was.

"It has come to my attention that we did not get all the Night Furies on the island." He said, immediately earning reactions all throughout the Hall. Men shot to their feet, looking alarmed as they scanned the area, as if expecting a million dragon to start pouring through the doors. Women dashed forward, grabbing their children and holding them tightly in her arms. Tuffnut and Ruffnut were so alarmed, they lost track of their aim, the rock shooting off-course from their slingshot to soar an inch away from Stoick's head. But if he noticed, he didn't show it.

He held his hand up for silence, but it was a moment before everybody calmed down enough to pay proper attention. Astrid had gone numb, feeling as though all the blood was rushing away from her head and leaving her dizzy. She shuffled a bit as she tried to find her footing, Snotlout reaching out to try and help her stand upright. But she shook away his offer roughly, eyes wide and focused on the Chief. "So far it's only one." He went on, voice booming across the room to be heard. "It's somewhere across the island, and it's the dragon that had been here on Berk before. The one that caused all this."

"No." Astrid whispered hoarsely.

The men were visibly more relaxed by the fact that it was only one dragon, but the recognition in their eyes was enough to send Astrid's skin crawling. They knew which one it was. The one that had sent Hiccup back to Berk bruised and bloodied more than once. The one that had turned Berk and twisted it so that it was entirely upside-down. Men started to grumble to one another, some already tripping over themselves trying to get to Stoick.

"We have to go out there and find it!" He went on, Astrid's eyes growing huge as he went on. "With its past, we cannot let this one escape us like some of the others did." His eyes narrowed into slits, fists curling tightly. "We have to find the Night Fury and kill it. Otherwise all we've worked for could be for nothing." A few anxious looks were exchanged, a few of the dragons in the Hall titling their heads in confusion. "Whoever comes with us will not be able to have room for weakness. Berk may be a dragon-friendly place now, but this thing is not a dragon. It's a monster. And the sooner we get rid of it, the better!" His words ended in a strong shout, the crowd around Astrid starting to nod in agreement, getting up from their tables and

yelling out cheers of assent.

"I want to go!"

"Tell me where to find it! I'll finish it off!"

"It needs to pay for what it did to Berk!"

"We'll show it what happens when ye mess with Vikings!"

"Kill it! Before it finds the island! Before it finds the children!"

Astrid's heart picked up to be a million times it should be, ramming against her ribcage so hard, she thought that somebody was punching her. Her hands went numb, the plates she was holding falling to the ground in what seemed like slow-motion. They slammed against the ground, wood and food skidding across the ground in a messy heap. The others standing around her let out loud complaints at this, shuffling away to be out of the line of fire. But the blonde was too dead to the world to even try and respond to them. She stared over at Stoick, the ground shaking underneath her feet. His expression. Sad, angry, worried, regretful, disappointed.

Hiccup.

Something happened to Hiccup.

The girl spun on her heel, not even bothering to pick up the mess she had made before running for the exit. The other teenagers gasped with surprise at her sudden departure, staring after her a little oddly. She rushed for the door, trying to hide behind as many Vikings as she could. She had no idea how much Stoick knew about the situation; if he saw her sprinting for the exit, would he make her stay? Skirting through the mass of Vikings that were now up on their feet, she made her way as quick as she could to the end of the Hall. Reaching up, she gripped the handle of it tightly, about to pull back on it. But suddenly, a voice cut through her thoughts.

"And where are you going?"

She turned, rolling her eyes yet again. "Snotlout, please." She begged. "I'm busy."

"Busy doing what?" Fishlegs asked, panting for air as he stood beside Snotlout.

Astrid blinked, eyes flickering over to Stoick. The Chief was surrounded by Vikings who were stumbling over themselves, trying to volunteer to go with him. The thought made Astrid's stomach churn, and she swallowed back the bad taste in her throat. Stoick nodded every once and a while, gaze sweeping over his people as he tried to see which ones were best to go. But as he looked out over them, he caught sight of Astrid, the girl freezing in place with one hand on the door. The Chief and her locked gazes, Stoick's eyes narrowing in confusion and suspicion. "We have to go." Astrid whispered out of the corner of her mouth, spinning around and breaking her eye contact with the man. Her hands shook slightly as she fumbled with the door, glancing back to see Stoick start to try and push his way over in their direction. But she finally managed to get it open, a blast of

freezing cold wind ramming against her as she jogged down the steps.

The others followed her around the back of the Hall, looking confused. "What are we doing?" Snotlout demanded, crashing into Astrid's back as she came to an abrupt halt. She stared fixedly at the bush that was just now starting to grow back from the fires, spinning in place as she looked around the area. This was where she had left Hiccup, and now he was gone. It was like he'd never been here at all. The girl closed her eyes tightly, turning around stiffly so that she could glare back at the audience staring at her.

"There is no 'we.'" She said clearly, stressing each word. "It's just a big mess. And I don't know what's going on." Snotlout raised an eyebrow at her, the teens mirroring his expression as silence settled over them. They looked at her expectantly, Astrid giving out a huff as she drew a hand sloppily through her bangs. "It's something of Hiccup's." She explained. A little of the confusion melted off their faces (save for Tuffnut's). Hiccup's plans always caused some kind of trouble, as well as being known for their complications and difficulty.

"What?" Snotlout asked. "Is it about that dragon?"

Astrid opened her mouth to reply, but Fishlegs poked his way into the conversation. "If I remember right, Stoick was talking about that female Night Fury that was brought here almost a year ago?" He reminded them. "Wasn't she the one that caused Toothless to leave? And the one who wanted Hiccup dead? I didn't know she was the one controlling the Raids. I always thought that dragons acted together now that the Red Death was killed by Hiccup." He paused a moment before shaking his head. "Hiccup wants her alive? What changed? She almost wiped Berk off the ocean!"

"I know!" Ruffnut exclaimed. "I like her!"

"Please!" Astrid shouted sharply, cutting them off rudely. "She's changed now. Hiccup showed me how she isn't like that anymore, and if you guys wanted ANY kind of part in this, you're going to just have to completely forget what happened these past months, because it doesn't matter anymore." She blinked, turning and shooting a look over at Ruffnut and Tuffnut. "For some it'll be easier to forget." She added as she crossed her hands over her chest.

She shook her head. "Anyway." She sighed. "We cannot let the other Vikings get to that dragon. Whatever happens, they can't touch her. She got hurt, and now she can't see, so if the others get to her, she's not going to stand a chance. I need to get to her before anybody else, and without Hiccup, I have no idea how to do that." She trailed off, starting suddenly as she turned to her friends. They were looking at her oddly, obviously not catching on fully to the short story she was rushing through. She pointed to each of them, startled. "Can you guys cause a distraction?" She asked excitedly.

Tuffnut immediately brightened at this. He leaned forward in anticipation, moving over and slapping his sister in the process. "What kind of distraction?" He asked eagerly. "I can do all kinds!"

"You all need to do it." Astrid said tensely. "Just- just make sure that you delay Stoick leaving as much as you can. But don't let on you know about any of this." If they even knew. If they were even taking in what she was saying. After exchanging glances from one another silently, one by one, they gave small nods. "Great." She sighed heavily, feeling a small hint of relief at this. "I promise I'll get back to you guys, and I know that it's confusing. Justâ€¦.cause _some_ kind of distraction. Hiccup always knows what he's doing, we know that much, right?" _If I can just find Hiccup._

"Well, yeah. That's always obvious." Snotlout said.

"Well some people just don't get that." Astrid huffed. "Thank you, though. Hopefully you'll be able to stall long enough for us to do something."

"Yeah, but can you just go over that one more-" Fishlegs started.

Astrid heard the creak of the Mess Hall door opening, a warm wave of fear going down her spine as she started to back up rapidly. "I'm sorry!" She hissed. "Just try and stall!" She rounded the corner as fast as she could, panic making her throat constrict. She heard footsteps stop a ways away. Stoick's voice reached her ears, the Chief openly suspicious now as he addressed the group that Astrid had just left moments before.

"What are you doing out here? Where is Astrid?" He asked.

Astrid flattened herself against the wall, listening as she gasped for air that didn't seem to fill her lungs. Snotlout spoke up first, a wave of relief rushing through the girl at his words. "Stoick! I'm so glad you're here! Fishlegs was _just_ about to push me into the ocean!" When the man didn't reply, Snotlout backtracked, emphasizing the words. "_Push me into the ocean! _First of all: that's physically impossible! Second of all: I'm pretty sure that it would be frowned upon in most societies!"

"What?" Stoick asked, baffled.

"Fishlegs!" Ruffnut snapped. "What's your problem? Stop throwing people into the ocean! I've told you before!"

"I-I- I can't stop myself!" Fishlegs improvised.

"He's a maniac! Stoick you have to stop him before he throws all of Berk into the ocean!" Snotlout yelled.

"I don't have time for this." Stoick sighed, footsteps sounding as though he was starting to turn.

All of a sudden, a violent-sounding scuffling started, Snotlout starting to scream for real this time. "STOICK, HE'S ACTUALLY THROWING ME INTO THE OCEAN!" Astrid's eyes widened a fraction as she leaned over slightly, blinking rapidly as she saw Fishlegs starting to drag Snotlout away from the group. "FISHLEGS STOP, YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO DO THAT! HELP!" Stoick jerked forward, looking ultimately baffled as he tried to help Snotlout. Ruffnut and Tuffnut dashed forward, purposely making it harder for Stoick as they tried to help

as well. They flailed their arms, smacking the Chief and tripping him up.

Astrid would have to work with that distraction.

Okay. Where did Toothless and the others go? She racked her brain for answers, trying to remember what Hiccup had said before. "Something about eating while we wereâ€¦" She whispered, voice barely audible as she tried to clear her mind better. She snapped her eyes open, blue orbs sparkling. "The beach!" She whispered, turning and looking over to the west. It was probably a three minute run from the Mess Hall, but that wasn't factoring in the rocks she would have to climb over to get to the shoreline. She'd just have to be fast. It was clear that their distraction wasn't going to work for very long.

Breaking into a sprint, Astrid made for the beach as fast as her legs could carry her. Her breath came in rapid gasps, and she prayed to Thor that she would not be spotted. Was Hiccup spotted? Where was he? The thoughts fueled her burning legs, giving her the energy she needed to tear her way down the side of Berk. The ground underneath her started to slope down towards the rocky shore; she could almost feel herself tripping as she stumbled and staggered. The Mess Hall was shrinking behind her, getting smaller and smaller the farther she raced.

She risked a glance over her shoulder, eyes desperate for a look back at her friends. They were still managing to keep Stoick from going back into the building and rallying together their search party. Snotlout and Fishlegs had broken out into a fist-fight of sorts, Stoick tried to get past Tuffnut and Ruffnut, who were loudly declaring bets on who would win. It was obvious that Stoick was running out of patience. You tended to do that when you were around that group. But he couldn't just leave the teenagers alone, it was pretty apparent that if he did, they would end up killing one another.

"Thank you, Thor." Astrid said fervently, breathing labored as she felt her legs start to weigh down. "Just let this whole thing go smoothly, please. I'm begging you." She whispered, turning back so that she could actually see where she was running. The words brought an ideal vision to mind, but Astrid knew from experience that things never worked out easily for them. Ever. The thought of this whole thing going down without a hitch was something to laugh at. Sometimes it felt like the day that Hiccup first found Nightflight marked the last peaceful day that Berk would ever see.

Finally, the beach started to become visible. The girl could already see Toothless, Mistyeyes, and Shadowclaw, all hunkered down together at the shore. They didn't seem to be fishing anymore, or at least they shouldn't have been. Shadowclaw and Ludi were splashing through the saltwater that lapped against the sand, probably having scared away any kind of fish that were in this area. Mistyeyes and Toothless sat a ways away, watching them play as they nibbled off bites of fish that had been caught. It looked very peaceful.

Too bad Astrid was going to ruin it.

"Hey!" She called out, Mistyeyes and Toothless immediately turning towards her voice as she started her rapid scramble down the rocks. Toothless leapt to his feet, eyes already searching frantically for

Hiccup. When he could not find his rider, he got significantly more distressed, kneading his feet on the ground anxiously as he waited impatiently for Astrid to arrive. Mistyeyes got up slower, eyes narrowed and cautious as she observed the female.

"_Something is wrong._" She said, blue eyes thoughtful.

"_Oh, you think so, do you?_" Toothless growled.

Mistyeyes's eyes flickered over to him, readying herself to snap at the male. But there wasn't anger in his tone, just worry. And she couldn't really blame him, either. Instead, she just shook her head, turning around and calling out to Shadowclaw and Ludi. "_Shadowclaw! Ludi! Get back on shore! Something is wrong!_" Shadowclaw perked at this, stopping mid-splash as he turned expectantly over to Mistyeyes. He turned, giving a chirp to Ludi, and nudging her back to shore. Granted, she had only gotten paw-deep in the water, (cats don't like water) but she shook herself out, fur going in every direction as she turned, bouncing her way back to the two Night Furies. She flicked her paws irritably, trying to get them as dry as she could on her way back.

Astrid lost her balance, falling the rest of the way down until she landed in a heap on the sand. She pushed herself up quickly, head spinning as she spat out nasty-tasting grains. Wiping her mouth free of the mess, she got shakily to her feet, wincing at the small tingling of pain from the motion. But she had to push it aside right now. Fishlegs could only avoid Snotlout's fist for so long. "We have a problem!" Astrid yelled, skidding to a stop in front of the two dragons. They looked at her incredulously, waiting for her to explain. She gulped in a few much-needed breaths before saying anything, leaning over and putting her hands on her knees.

But she pushed herself back up. "Stoick found out about Nightflight." She said, watching as the dragons' expressions changed from disbelief to horror. "They're going after herâ€¦trying to find her." She went on, still gasping. "I don't know where Hiccup is! I'm pretty sure that Stoick did something," Toothless's ears flattened at once, the dragon baring his teeth and letting out a feral snarl. "but I'm not sure." She added quickly at the new change. "The point is, without Hiccup, this whole operation is resting on our shoulders!"

Mistyeyes gave a tense nod, eyes turning determined. She turned to Toothless, blue eyes boring into his own green ones. "_It doesn't matter what we think about Nightflight._" She said firmly. "_Hiccup thinks that she deserves a second chance. We need to trust him._" Toothless silently agreed with her, though he did not say anything along the lines of: 'What are you talking about? What I think about Nightflight? Of course I won't leave her! I would never leave her! I love her!' It was a bit of a stretch to wish for something like that, but at least then Mistyeyes would know where his emotions were.

She shook her head to clear it, turning back to Astrid. The girl looked frazzled, desperately trying to think of something to say or do in this situation. Mistyeyes felt a flash of pain at this, feeling sorry for her. She opened her mouth to say something; she might be able to give the girl an idea to get her mind going for plans on what to do. But then she snapped it closed, cursing herself as she did so. She had forgotten that Hiccup was the only Vikings that could hear her speak. Make that hear any kind of dragon speak.

"Okay, I've got it!" Astrid yelled suddenly, causing all of the dragons to jump. She turned swiftly over to Toothless, pointing to him fixedly. "You take Ludi with you and go find Hiccup!" She ordered, the tabby cat bouncing up to sit atop said dragon's head. "If- I mean _when_ you find him, you go back to where Nightflight is and we can meet you there if we can! Mistyeyes! You, me, and Shadowclaw are going to get Nightflight and try to get her out of there before the others can find her!" The gray Night Fury let out a chirp of affirmation as the girl said this. Shadowclaw hopped out from the ocean, shaking the water off his scales and going over to stand beside Mistyeyes.

Toothless took one last long look at the ground before spinning around, charging back up the hill. The others watched him anxiously, eyes trained on the dragon until he disappeared over the rise. Astrid's hands wrung together nervously in front of her, mind trying to think of a million things at once. _Is this what Hiccup felt like before he went to face the Red Death? _She wondered timidly. _About whether or not we would make it out? Whether or not things would go perfectly fine, or horribly wrong? _"Please come back from wherever you are, Hiccup." She said softly. "I can't do this alone."

Mistyeyes whined at this, leaning over and pressing her snout comfortingly against the girl's side as she cooed. Astrid sighed, putting her hand on the dragon's smooth hide and stroking her for a moment. She tried to draw as much strength from her as she could, wishing that she knew more about what was happening. Maybe then she would be able to plan it out better. But she roused herself from those thoughts, forcing her legs to move so that she could hoist herself onto the gray Night Fury. "Okay." She said when she was balanced. She turned around, looking back in the direction that she had been taken by Hiccup before. The way that led to Nightflight. "Alright, girl, we have to hurry." She said, feeling a pang in her heart.

Normally she would be more than happy to ride on a Night Fury. Not many Vikings got to claim that. But she couldn't forget her true dragon, Stormfly. She would never be able to fly again, Astrid wasn't even sure that Hiccup could find a way to help her fly. What was she supposed to do if her dragon was grounded without a way to gain altitude? She would never be able to give Stormfly up, no matter what. So what was she going to do?

She had to focus, that was what she was going to do.

Mistyeyes paused a moment, letting Astrid get a tight hold onto her. Then she flattened herself to the ground, pushing off the beach and shooting into the air at a million miles an hour. Shadowclaw followed, able to keep up amazingly, for his smaller size. Astrid was jostled, locking her arms tightly around Mistyeyes's neck as the dragon rocketed forward. The girl felt her cheeks start to pull backwards from the force, the girl starting to feel a little dizzy by the time that Berk vanished behind them. Riding a Night Fury was much different than riding any other dragon. How did Hiccup manage to look so calm while he rode his? Especially when they were doing all their stunts and tricks? It was almost impossible for Astrid to stay upright on this one!

But then again, Hiccup usually slowed Toothless's pace when she was riding with them so that he was beside her. Riding a Night Fury at full speed was entirely different. It still terrified Astrid as much as it had the very first day she had gotten onto Toothless. For the first part, anyway. She would have let out a scream, but she couldn't breathe. And it would most likely get lost in the wind either way.

Mistyeyes shot through the quickly-gathering clouds, not even faltering in her strokes as thunder boomed overhead, nearly shattering Astrid's eardrums in the process. Astrid managed to push herself up with effort, narrowing her eyes against the freezing wind as she peered down at the cliffs below. Her eyes watered uncontrollably at the gusts blowing against her, the girl cursing softly as she rubbed at them irritably. "I hope you know where you're going!" She screamed, almost unable to be heard over the storm that was brewing. "Because I sure don't!"

Mistyeyes chirped back at her, hoping that it would assure the Viking. She swerved around the storm as best she could, starting to feel the first few freezing raindrops against her scales. Her blue eyes were focused and intelligent, boring through the darkness and searching for the cliff that she had been to many times before now. She felt like she would find it blindfolded by now, which must have been because she felt so guilty traveling the same path whenever she brought food to Nightflight. Guilt made things easier for her to remember, it felt like sometimes.

Finally, she caught sight of it. She could see the cliff that they had left only hours before, and she could see the dragon that resided there. Nightflight was curled into a tight ball, shivering from the cold. She jumped every so often at the thunder that split itself through the sky, looking surprised and panicked. "_There_!" She shouted over to Shadowclaw, the smaller Night Fury already landing before she said anything. Leaning to the side, Mistyeyes made a too-sharp turn, rocketing down to the ground a little faster than she probably should have. Astrid let out a sharp yell, nearly choking Mistyeyes as she tightened her grip on the dragon's neck. Fighting the urge to gag, the gray Night Fury managed to stick the landing neatly.

She skidded a heartbeat, pads stinging from scraping against the rock. But she righted herself before she could skid right off the face of the cliff, turning swiftly and digging her claws into the stone. Astrid scrambled off of her back rapidly, shaking a little as she hit the ground running. Mistyeyes had to give Astrid credit, though: the girl ran right up to Nightflight without even hesitating. "Hey! Hey, get up!" She called out awkwardly, still reeling from Mistyeyes's speedy flight.

Nightflight blinked her sightless eyes, stiffening at her voice. She got to her feet slowly, backing up so cautiously, Astrid was pretty sure that a snail would be able to get faster than her. She huffed out a short breath, realizing that she had probably scared her. She had to be more like Hiccup. _What would Hiccup do? _She smiled, forcing herself to calm down and try to make her voice as gentle as possible. "Hey, it's okay, girl. I'm sorry I scared you." Nightflight blinked, straightening out as she seemed to recognize Astrid. "That's right." Astrid said encouragingly, glancing over her shoulder as she did so. "You know me, girl. I'm from before. I'm here to help

you."

Nightflight's ears flattened, the dragon letting out a confused coo.

"Hiccup isn't here." Astrid said, noting the dragon get more nervous at the words. "Hey, it's okay. It's okay. You have to listen to me, alright?" Was that the rumble of thunder, or could she hear voices out there getting closer? She turned to look, but couldn't see through the clouds that blocked her view. "Alright, you have to work with me here. Remember, I'm with Hiccup. There are Vikings that are going to come over here, okay?" Nightflight stiffened, a small growl forming in her throat. "No, no! It'll be okay! We just have to get you out of here before they come! If you let me—" She blanched, realizing the fatal hole in her plan.

Nightflight couldn't see.

How was she going to fly?

"Oh, gods." Astrid whispered to herself, Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw starting to get nervous as they looked behind them anxiously. That meant it wasn't just Astrid's imagination; they could hear something out there too. Whirling back to Nightflight, Astrid felt a grave sense of duty. She knew what she had to do. But it was not going to be ideal. "You have to let me guide you to somewhere safe." Nightflight tilted her head at this. "I can tell you where to fly and how to do it." Astrid went on, voice a little shaky. "You just have to trust me and let me ride you."

For a moment, Nightflight almost looked angry. Her ears flattened, eyes narrowing as she shuffled back more. Her hind legs were teetering over the edge of the cliff by now, she wasn't going to be able to back up anymore, otherwise she'd just fall off. Nightflight looked almost offended for a moment, and Astrid slowly started to count the number of seconds they probably had until the other Vikings came. But suddenly Nightflight blinked rapidly, looking unfocused for a moment as she tilted her head. She seemed to remembering something, or imagining a flashback.

The voice were getting closer.

Astrid shut her eyes tightly. "We're going to die." She moaned sorrowfully.

But suddenly Nightflight drew herself up, jumping right for Astrid. The girl let out a shriek, backtracking rapidly as she tried to get out the dragon's line. Mistyeyes tensed, shooting to her feet with alarm at the pounce. Shadowclaw's ears flattened, eyes growing to be a million times their normal size. But Nightflight jumped too short. She landed right in front of Astrid, the blonde gasping as her heart pounding a million times a second. The Night Fury swung herself around, eyes narrowed as she showed her back to Astrid.

She was giving her permission.

Astrid swallowed back the lump in her throat, turning over to Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw. "You guys will have to help me." She said a little nervously. Mistyeyes nodded, wincing as a Viking's shout echoed over to where they sat. She leapt to her feet, bounding over

to stand on Nightflight's right side. Shadowclaw did the same with the left. Astrid gave a small nod, feeling a little overwhelmed as she cautiously placed her hands on the back of Nightflight. She glanced over in her direction, holding her breath as she waited for the Night Fury to kick her off. But Nightflight was stiff as a board; she was going to be moving any time soon, unless Astrid was on her back.

Sighing, the girl pulled herself up with a grimace, shuffling nervously as she held onto the Night Fury. "Okay." She whispered, closing her eyes tightly. _Just do what Hiccup would do. _Her mind coached her. _Oh, Hiccup! Where are you? I need you! _This would be so much easier if she were able to have Hiccup by her side. The shouts of the Vikings were getting closer; the men had made quick work in scaling the skies, it seemed. "Okay." She repeated, blue eyes snapping open. She tightened her hold onto Nightflight, feeling the blind dragon start to crouch low to the rock face. "Let's go." She said airily.

Nightflight paused for a moment, the sounds of Vikings less than a few yards away. They were getting close. They were running out of time. "Go!" Astrid yelled desperately. "Nightflight, GO!" The Night Fury stiffened, eyes widening as her wings shot out at her sides. She leapt off the rock more out of fear than anything, the take-off clumsy at its best. Astrid shrieked with surprise, unable to help Nightflight as the Night Fury scrambled for purchase in the air.

They started to fall down towards the ocean, Astrid desperately trying to suck in enough air to call out direction. Which way was up? Which way was down? All she knew was that the ocean was getting closer and closer way too fast, her mind drawing a panicked blank as she reached for something to say. Mistyeyes yelled out something to Nightflight in dragon's language, but Nightflight was panicking too much to try and follow her words. The sounds of Vikings were too close, the ocean even closer. The only thing on Astrid's mind was Hiccup. What would Hiccup do?

He sure as heck wouldn't be doing this.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Toothless had checked the Smithy, the Mess Hall, and the Elder's house. All of them came up blank. This was the last place he could think of for Hiccup to be. The Night Fury looked at Hiccup's home curiously, wondering why he would be here of all places. Shaking his head, Toothless bounded forward, ears perked for some kind of noise as he nosed his way inside the home. It took a few tries to get the door to open, doors were things that dragons hated. You couldn't work them very well without thumbs, after all. But he finally managed to get it open, stepping inside the house with a noisy creak of floorboards. He raised his snout into the air, sniffing cautiously as he looked back and forth. He could smell the usual scents of Hiccup and his father. Ludi gave a small meow, ears perked as she tilted her head back, taking in noisy sniffles as she tried to mimic Toothless's movements. "Hiccup?" Toothless called out into the empty-looking house.

Nothing came.

Toothless sighed, glancing over his shoulder and debating on whether or not to go look someplace else. But then he caught another scent from the breeze that blew through the living room. A recent smell. Stoick and Hiccup's familiar scent hung in the air, making a path up the stairs and to the left. Hiccup's room. Toothless's eyes narrowed slowly at the smells. They were much too close together, he thought. He could barely tell one from the other. Stoick and Hiccup were _not_ _close enough to walk together like that. Whenever they did walk together around the island, they would kept a respective distance between themselves. Unless Hiccup was hurt and had to be carried, something was off. Ludi seemed to be thinking the same thing he was, the small cat's ears flattening against her head as she shuffled uncertainly. She gave a small chirp, urging Toothless on.

Turning away, Toothless came through the doorway, leaving the door ajar behind him. The Night Fury walked up the stairs carefully, watching his feet carefully as he went. They should really make these things bigger. He had to have balance to get up these stairs. As he walked up carefully, Toothless sniffed once more, a hint of anger blossoming inside him as he realized that there was another smell mixed in with Hiccup's own. Fear. Raw and cold fear hung in the house like a curtain; Toothless was faintly shocked that he had missed it before now.

He walked more quickly now, making it up the stairs and leaning over to the side that the scent veered off to. Hiccup's room. Toothless growled softly, pacing forward and looking at the door with rage. The chair leaning against it wasn't conveniently placed, that was for sure. It was locked underneath specifically to keep the boy's door impossible to open from the other side. "Hiccup!" Toothless yelled, putting his ear to the door when he got no answer. There were scraping noises from the other side, muffled gasps of pain and banging. Panicking, Toothless turned, raising his claws and sinking it into the wood of the chair. The Night Fury grunted, throwing his weight to the side as he ripped the chair away from the door. The crashed into the wall at the end of the hall, Toothless not even pausing to survey his work before crashing himself against Hiccup's door. Ludi squealed with surprise at this, squalling loudly as she dug her claws into the Night Fury's head, clinging to him like her life depended on it.

The door broke underneath his strength, swinging open loosely and showing the scene to the Night Fury. A mountain of books and other assorted objects were piled together on top of his bed. Things like books, blankets, notebooks, and pillows stacked on top of one another. Hiccup was at the top, stretching with a pained grimace on his face as he tried to wrap his hands around the window bordering the roof of the room. He looked like he was in a lot of pain, his body showing signs of exhaustion and failure, but he kept reaching. Upon Toothless's coming into the room, Hiccup gasped sharply with surprise, whipping his head around to look at his dragon. Doing so caused him to tip his balance, the boy slipping off of his perch and toppling off the makeshift stairs.

He slammed into the ground with a painful smacking noise, curling up with a grumble and holding his bad arm tightly. "Dangit." He hissed through clenched teeth. Toothless stiffened with worry, but Hiccup managed to push himself back up. He turned his olive eyes over to Toothless, giving the dragon a relieved smile. "Thank the gods, Toothless! And Ludi! I've never been so happy to see you two!" Hiccup

blustered, getting off the ground with a little difficulty before dashing forward, wrapping his arm around his Night Fury tightly. He tried to use his other arm, but immediately stepped backwards, holding it with a small hiss. At Toothless's look, he tried to recover, brushing it off quickly. "It's fine, Toothless. I'm fine." He said painfully, voice choked. "I guess it's acting up againâ€¦" He said, trailing off with a saddened look.

Toothless stepped forward, concerned as he nosed Hiccup's injuries softly. "What happened?"

"My dad." Hiccup said softly, refusing to look at Toothless in the eyes.

The Night Fury drew backwards, looking a cross between mournful and furious. "What did he do?"

"I tried to tell him about Nightflight too early. I had no choice." Hiccup sighed heavily. "He wouldn't listen to me, just like he always does." His voice grew a little bitter at this, but then it changed back to worn-out, tired. "He put me in here and told me I couldn't leave. He wouldn't let me tell him how Nightflight has changed." He closed his eyes tightly, grumbling to himself for a heartbeat. "He never listens to me. I was stupid to even think that he would even try to do it this time."

Toothless's ears flattened, going forward and pushing his head against Hiccup's with a coo. He wrapped his wing around his human, pulling him backwards carefully into a soft embrace. "I'm sorry." He offered weakly, feeling helpless when it came to these things. He couldn't go out there and make Stoick treat Hiccup like a son should be treated, the Chief couldn't understand. Toothless was only able to speak to Hiccup, he couldn't have Stoick understand him like his son did. He couldn't go to Stoick and tell him how amazing his son was, and how much it hurt Hiccup when he got cast aside. He couldn't tell him that his son was the brightest thing on this island, and how lucky he was to have somebody like that related to him. He couldn't express to the man how terrible it was to watch this happy person break apart and crumple to pieces because of these things.

Hiccup leaned over, taking Toothless's comfort for a few minutes as he closed his eyes. He took a few deep breaths, getting himself under control before he did anything. Toothless sighed glumly, wishing that Stoick could see this. He wished that the man could see something like this and feel guilty for the rest of his life. He deserved it. Ludi whined softly, curling close to herself as her eyes got big and sad. She leaned over, prodding Hiccup gently with her paw, as if stroking him. Hiccup gave her a small little smile, Ludi drawing back and looking a little better.

"Nightflight." Hiccup said suddenly, recovering as he pulled away.

"She's in trouble." Toothless said, already turning so that Hiccup could get onto his back. The teen complied, swing his leg over Toothless's back and locking his prosthetic in place firmly. "We have to get there before the other Vikings do. Astrid should be there already." Toothless explained, turning swiftly and leaping into the air. Hiccup switched into the correct position, the two shooting up to the ceiling and soaring through the gap in the roof. They shot

into the freezing weather outside, Hiccup blinking rapidly as a few raindrops landed on him, freezing to the touch. He couldn't decide whether it was rain or hail that was coming down.

"Then we have to get there fast." Hiccup said tensely. "She can't deal with this by herself."

Toothless nodded tensely, pushing himself as fast as he could possibly go. Hiccup leaned over, green eyes narrowed as he looked down at the grass of Berk. It was empty. Usually by this time, people were crowding the streets, trying to find some kind of late-night entertainment before they retired to bed. But now it was barren. Nobody was taking a moonlit walk, no kids were running around playing Kill the Red Death, and no old seniors were telling a group of listeners stories of the older times. It was a ghost town. And that couldn't be good at all.

Hiccup pushed Toothless faster, the Night Fury's jaw locking backwards as he shot forward. They left Berk behind in a matter of minutes, thunder rumbling around them as they made for Nightflight's cliff. Hiccup kept an eye out for Vikings that could be around flying on their dragons, biting his lower lip as he expected to be stopped by a party. But there was nothing up here either. Panic encased him like a blanket; had he missed too much? Had they already killed Nightflight? The thought made fear stab him through the heart, the boy almost forgetting how to breathe. "There!" He yelled, catching sight of the cliff that they had left Nightflight.

Toothless started, veering down to the jutting rock steeply. Hiccup only narrowed his eyes, though, the crease in his forehead getting bigger and bigger the closer they got. "No—that can't be right." Toothless landed neatly on the rock, ears flicking back and forth as his eyes widened. He turned a full circle, looking confused as his wings twitched at his sides. Hiccup unlatched his fake leg, a numb expression on his face as he slid off of Toothless. "No—" He said, voice choked on itself. "That isn't—what—?"

The place was empty.

Nobody was there.

Hiccup turned, rush over to the edge of the cliff, leaning over precariously as he tried to see down to the ocean. He squinted, the dark making it too hard to see. He drew backwards with a disappointed look. He slowly turned over to Toothless and Ludi, the two staring at him fearfully, waiting for him to speak. His green eyes were weighted, shoulders loose as he looked at them desperately.

"We're too late." He croaked.

Toothless ducked his head low, mentally cursing himself for not being fast enough. His shoulders were hunched, as if the weight of the situation suddenly slammed down on him, and he was unable to hold it up. Ludi was subdued for once, expression sober as she looked down at her paws. Disappointment and sorrow hung in the air between them like a heavy blanket, Hiccup's shoulders starting to shake as he fought to get enough breath into his lungs. He looked over in the direction of Berk, the small glow of torches poking their way through the darkness, as if trying to shed light over the scene.

But it only stood as a reminder of what had ruined everything.

Hiccup drew his knees up to his chest, bringing his arms up slowly and drawing his fingers through his hair. He ducked his head close to his chest, eyes starting to burn as he imagined Nightflight having to defend herself in vain. And what about Astrid? Was she in trouble now that it was known she was trying to help the Night Fury? The thought made a weight make itself apparent in Hiccup's stomach, and he closed his eyes, wishing that he could have been faster, could have made his father listen.

This was all his fault.

"We're too late." He repeated brokenly.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **I have fallenâ€¦to my knees. As I sing a lullaby of painâ€¦**

I'm feeling brokenâ€¦in my melody. As I sing to help the tears go away.

Promise of a Lifetime - Kutless

I hope I get to hear from you all again!

Me: And now, it would be my honor to present Stoick with the 'Best Parent Ever' Award! ^^

Stoick: :D YAY!

Me: Stoick, you have shown us that you are the best parent out there! What do you have to say to all the children out there that can only wish that you were their dad?

Stoick: I'd like to say-

Hiccup: Stop the ceremony. O-o

Stoick: No! I need you to see how good of a father I am! I'm such a nice person! D:

Me: Yeah, Hiccup, he really is.

Stoick: I'd like to thank the academy, and my-

Hiccup: I SAID STOP THE CEREMONY!

If you all don't get that joke, I am severely disappointed.

40. Chapter 40

A/N: Wow! Once again, thanks for the reviews! They make me feel all warm and fuzzy ;3

â€¦I've got a crap-load of candy with me as I type. So y'all better brace yourself.

****I want to swim away but don't know how.****

****Sometimes it feels just like I'm falling in the ocean.****

****Let the waves up take me down, let the hurricane set in motion.****

Into the Ocean - Blue October

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The air rushed by Astrid so fast that she couldn't even think of breathing. Her hands dug tightly into Nightflight's neck, probably choking the dragon as she fought to cling on. Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw tried to dash forward, claws straining to latch onto Nightflight in hopes of helping her gain back altitude. But the dragoness was falling too fast, flailing and twisting as she tried to figure out where she was. Her blinded eyes were stretched wide with shock and fear, the dragon too much in shock to let out the wailing that was gradually building inside of her throat.

Astrid's thoughts were everywhere at once, and yet they weren't going anywhere. As the wind slapped against the girl and buffeted her everywhere on the dragon. All she could think about was Hiccup. Where he was, how he would react in this kind of situation. Or maybe how disappointed he would be when Toothless brought him here. His face when he would see how Astrid had failed in rescuing Nightflight. She could just imagine the painfully-heartbroken look that would overcome the boy's face, his voice small and betrayed as he said: "Why couldn't you do it, Astrid?" His green eyes raw with sorrow as he stared at her fixedly.

"Why couldn't you do it?"

Astrid's eyes narrowed firmly, grip tightening on the dragon as her knuckles bleached themselves white. No. She wasn't going to let Hiccup down, no matter what happened, she would be there for him. "Extend your wings!" She hissed, jerking herself forward as she whispered fiercely into the Night Fury's ears. Nightflight faltered in her thrashing for a heartbeat, looking confused as she let out a sharp noise. Mistyeyes took the chance, rushing forward and clamping her teeth down tightly on the dragoness's tail. Nightflight let out a sharp retort at this, whipping around to snap back at the gray Night Fury. Shadowclaw copied Mistyeyes's movements as the dragon started to turn, leaning forward and grabbing one of Nightflight's feet.

The two pulled backwards rapidly, the ocean getting closer and closer as they started to slow their descent. Nightflight's thrashing subsided, getting weaker and weaker until she was completely still. Mistyeyes's face was creased with effort as she held the weight of both Nightflight and Astrid in her jaws; Shadowclaw's muscles rippled underneath his scales as he did his best to help the older dragon out. Biting her lower lip, Astrid repeated her instructions to the dragon, blue eyes still narrowed as she tried to figure out what was going on. "Extend your wings!" She coached, silently screaming at the dragon to open her ears and listen to her.

But it looked like her prayers did not go unanswered. Nightflight suddenly seemed to catch onto what was happening, her black wings

shooting out at her sides. In doing so, she accidentally slapped Shadowclaw in the face, sending the smaller youngling flying out over to the side. The brown Night Fury rocketed down, falling into the ocean with a large smack as he went under. Astrid's eyes widened considerably, the girl leaning over and looking after the youngling with a panicked expression. But as fast as he had gone under, the Night Fury poked its head up from the waves, green eyes flashing with annoyance.

Astrid breathed out a small sigh of relief, shoulders sagging with relief as she let out a small smile. They managed not to fall to their deaths, that had to account for something at least. But the moment of relief was short-lived. The absence of Shadowclaw's help proved too difficult for Mistyeyes. The dragon buckled underneath the sudden weight, Nightflight beginning to speed up in her descent as she let out a sharp yelp. Astrid shrieked with surprise, floating up from her perch on top of the dragon as they fell again. Mistyeyes gasped sharply, trying to get a hold on the girl before it was too late. But the trio smacked into the water at full-speed, Astrid losing her hold as she was ripped away from both Night Furies.

Freezing cold water rushed into Astrid's mouth and nose, clogging her airways as she coughed, trying to get the water out of her system. The saltwater stung her scrapes and injuries she had acquired from the battle, causing her to cringe away painfully. Her throat closed in on itself as she fought to get over the shock from the sudden burst of cold. She forced herself to move, arms and legs feeling like weights as she made for the surface. Clawing and kicking out at awkward angles, Astrid tried to remember which way was up and which way was down. If she mixed up to the directions, she was in a lot of trouble.

But she'd been kicking far too long. _Was _she going the right way? Her struggles started to get weaker and weaker, wounds screaming with pain as she fought to clear her mind for comprehensible thoughts. So far, it wasn't working. Her arms were failing her, and her mind was getting fuzzy. The girl tried to keep going; she couldn't have fallen that deep into the sea, could she? Her body started to relax against her will, breaking down as she started to feel herself sink deeper.

She just solved her other problem! And now she was right smack dab in another one!

Her head started to dip close to her chest, Astrid's held breath brushing out of her chest in the form of thick bubbles. They rose quickly away from her, leaving her without any more oxygen to take in. Her arms and legs dragged her down, chest burning with fire as the girl struggled to stay awake. She felt herself falling deeper and deeper into oblivion, mind starting to slip away. She was drowning! The only thought that actually made sense rang back and forth in her mind, vibrating against the sides of her head painfully. Hiccup's crestfallen face flashed into view behind her eyelids, the brooding frown that Astrid hated to see looking back at her.

"Why couldn't you do it?"

Suddenly, teeth met with the back of the girl's collar. Astrid felt a weight tug her upwards, pulling her limp body up towards the surface.

After what felt like forever, the blonde felt her head break through the water, arms and legs snapping into unnecessary action as she started to flounder in the water. Her hands smacked forward with a sense of urgency, throwing up water and spraying everyone within a two foot radius. Mistyeyes lifted her head up higher, hoisting the girl up and out of the water in the process. Astrid gasped for air like a fish out of water, blue eyes bugging out of her skull as her chest moved up and down rapidly. Her head spun like a top, and it took a moment for Astrid to be able to get a full grasp on what had just happened.

Shadowclaw and Nightflight were off the side, both being buffeted by waves as they were jostled back and forth. The little Night Fury seemed to be coaching Nightflight on how to move, yipping and barking in the dragoness's direction as he fought to keep himself afloat at the same time. Nightflight was going a sloppy version of the 'doggy-paddle', puffing and choking through the waves that slammed into her. But she seemed to be doing a much better job than Astrid was at swimming. Which was a little odd, considering that Astrid could actually see what she was doing.

The girl blushed beet red at the thought, turning with difficulty and looking back at Mistyeyes. "You can let me down, now." She said, voice punctured with sharp snaps as her teeth clattered from the cold. The dragon looked at her skeptically for a moment, but then shrugged, opening her mouth wide and letting Astrid fall back down into the water. Her head went under for a moment, but she was able to recover by herself this time, resurfacing with a large huff. She bounced up and down, being tossed around by the large slaps of water that smashed into her. She looked gratefully over to Mistyeyes, blue eyes flashing as she gave the dragon a small smile. "Thank you." She breathed out, relief alive in her voice.

Mistyeyes gave her a smile accompanied with a nod. Astrid turned around quickly, looking over to where Nightflight treaded water with a large amount of difficulty. She opened her mouth to say something, when suddenly a voice echoed down to the four, stern and booming in its tone. "Has anybody found anything yet?" It asked, Astrid gasping sharply as she recognized the voice. Shadowclaw seemed to realize who it was as well, eyes growing large as he turned to look anxiously at Astrid. The blonde's mind groped for an answer of what to do, the girl raising her arm and beckoning Shadowclaw forward urgently.

The Night Fury started, turning around with a hushed whisper. He stuck his tail up and out of the water, Nightflight leaning forward and clamping her jaws around it tightly. Shadowclaw winced at the pressure, but started to paddle forward, trying to make the least amount of noise possible. Though the same thing couldn't be said for Nightflight. The dragon splashed through the ocean nosily, ears flattening against her head as she tried to figure out where she was going. Shadowclaw flinched at the sharp noise, turning around and barking out something to Nightflight. The dragoness straightened, looking a little offended.

The voices subsided for a moment above them, Astrid feeling a strong sense of fear crawl over her. "Did you hear that?" Stoick demanded, voice nothing but a small echo the reverberated down to them. "I think it was the sound of dragons." Astrid grimaced at this, backpedaling rapidly as she flattened herself against the rock of the cliff that jutted out of the water. She watched, heart in her throat,

as Shadowclaw and Nightflight made agonizingly slow progress back to both her and Mistyeyes. Nightflight was trying to take care in being as quiet as she could. But when you were blind, and trying to swim, it didn't really come out as entirely silent.

The Vikings that were searching the sky above them had stopped in their chatter, trying to listen out for whatever their chief had heard. Shadowclaw and Nightflight were a few inches away from Astrid, the blonde gasping mentally at Stoick's next words. "I think they're close." _No, no, no! _She thought in a panic. _We've come so far! _Hastily, Astrid lunged forward, grabbing Shadowclaw in her arms and yanking forward. She pulled both dragons forward, tucking them in what she hoped was out of sight. She trembled from the effort, gasping as she lunged forward, draping her arms over Mistyeyes's back as she gasped for air.

The gray dragon looked surprised by the movement, ears perked as she looked at the blonde with an impressed expression. But Astrid was too tense to try and notice her silent praise. She was fixed on what was possibly going on atop the cliffs, trying to paint a mental picture in her mind. The Vikings must have been riding dragons; how else would they have gotten so high up? And there weren't any kind of ships surrounding the area of water. Besides, they might need help in bringing down the Night Fury later. What better thing to do than use something that's both transportation and a fighting supply? At least that was the thought that occurred to Astrid.

Silence reigned for a moment, nobody in the water even breathing to break the silence as they looked up anxiously. The only noise was the occasional rapid splash that came from Nightflight; Astrid hoped fervently that the sound could be dismissed to the Hunting Party as a stray wave smacking against the rock. Astrid had a permanent grimace on her face, the girl waiting with bated breath for some kind of assurance that things would be okay. It had to be okay, right? Otherwise Astrid didn't know how she would ever be able to face Hiccup again. She was entrusted with this plan by Hiccup; if she let it fall apart, would he ever forgive her?

Finally, Stoick's voice sounded again. "It must have been nothing." He sighed, sounding a little disappointed at the fact. Astrid sagged forward, burrowing her head into Mistyeyes's damp scales as she breathed out a gusty sigh of relief. She listened, still silent, as the sound of dragon wings tore through the silence. "Let's go back and search to the west!" Stoick commanded, voice strong even from where Astrid was floating. "We need to comb every inch of the land! We'll be in danger until we do!" Shouts and cheers of assent followed the speech, Astrid listening with a grim look on his face. The murmurings from one Viking to another started to subside, getting quieter and quieter until eventually there was nothing else.

Astrid bit her lip, craning her neck and leaning out to the side, trying to see up to the cliff that they had fallen from minutes before. But she couldn't manage to lean hard enough, all she saw was the looming mass of rock. Biting back her frustration, she hesitated a moment, reluctantly raising her voice. "Hello?" She called out tentatively, Mistyeyes letting out a worried coo as she called out. Pausing a moment, she started to push it, voice escalating to a yell. "HELLO?" She shouted, voice bouncing off the walls of rock and bouncing back into her ears.

Nothing.

The blonde let out a sigh, giving a small nod as she turned to look back at the trio of dragons watching her anxiously. "I think the coast is clear." She said, trying to sound more sure of herself than she really did. Shadowclaw perked at this, looking happy as he gave a small bounce. The movement caused a wave to slap into the girl, Astrid smiling as the water splashed over her. She cleared her throat, smile starting to vanish as she swept on.

"But we can't stay here anymore." She said, the smiles on the dragon's face crumbling at this. Much as she hated to ruin their fun, she had to be practical. "Those people could come back when they don't find Nightflight." She said, teeth still chattering together rapidly as she tried to warm herself up. She hugged her arms tightly, rubbing her arms up and down as she created a small hint of warmth. She kicked out firmly with her legs, unable to use her arms for treading by now. "We have to go someplace safer. Someplace more secluded." She paused a moment, surveying the area before adding: "If we stay here, we'll either freeze to death, or be found. I don't know about you guys, but I don't really want either of those things happening."

Mistyeyes gave a tense nod, as if agreeing with the girl's words. Astrid debated a moment, suddenly looking more concerned. "But how will Hiccup find us if we leave?" She asked aloud, voice getting smaller by now as she looked down into the water. People didn't normally like to go out and swim in Berk's ocean, and there was a reason for that. Any sane person who lives on an island where it snows most of the year would never suddenly decide to go out and jump into a ten-below-freezing temperature of water for a little bit of fun. Astrid was losing feeling her feet by now, the water started to feel like needles in her skin the longer she stayed inside.

The dragons didn't seem to feel anything wrong with the water, not even shivering a little bit as they all stared at her. But then again, dragons were fireproof. So there wasn't really a big mystery as to why they weren't as cold as she was. Shivering uncontrollably by now, Astrid cursed under her breath. "We have to get out. I'm going to freeze if we stay here any longer." She said, voice shaky as she trembled. "Hiccup will find us, I know he will. We just need a better place." She repeated, starting to feel like a broken record. Forcing her arms back into the numbing water, Astrid paddled forward, heading over for Nightflight. "You're going to have to listen to me, this time." She said, voice taking on a harder tone as she raised an eyebrow at the Night Fury. "We're not going to get anywhere with you ignoring me."

Nightflight curled her lip slightly, looking wounded as she turned away from her.

"Look." Astrid huffed. "I know I'm not Hiccup. You're just going to have to pretend I am or something. Because until we actually find out where he got himself, I'm all you have right now. And unless you embrace the fact, we might as well just stay here and let you get caught. In case you didn't know, the ocean isn't really a good hiding spot. If the clouds clear up while we're still here, we'll be sitting ducks." Nightflight blinked at this, turning over and eyeing the girl doubtfully. Astrid slapped her hands in the water out of frustration, rolling her eyes. "It's cloudy right now." She sighed slowly, as if

talking to a toddler. "When it clears up, we're going to be just sitting here in the wide open. We will be found. So unless you're tired of living, you need to listen to me."

Nightflight soured at her tone, cloudy eyes narrowing slowly. Astrid glared at her sharply, the dragon seemed to be aware of the look as she snorted underneath her breath. Finally, she turned, showing her to back to Astrid a little reluctantly. She turned back, shooting the girl an expression that obviously said: 'I let you ride me once and ended up face-first in the ocean. If that happens again, you're dead meat.'

Trying her best to ignore the threat, Astrid leaned forward, placing her hands carefully on the dragon. She hesitated, giving her a moment to adjust before pulling herself onto her back. She blinked, almost slipping right off the dragoness's back and into the ocean again. The water was making the Night Fury's back slick and hard to hang onto, Astrid holding on tightly as she recovered sloppily. Mistyeyes bounced forward, eyes wide with concern as she tried to help Astrid. But the blonde waved her off quickly, a determined look settling in her eyes. She was Astrid Hofferson! She could do anything! She'd been the top rank in her class when they were in Dragon Training, she got what she wanted by threatening people's lives on a daily basis, and she was one of the best fighters that existed on Berk! She could ride a dragon by herself, that much was certain.

"Alright. Extend your wings." Astrid coached, starting at the most basic part to try and help them along. Nightflight rolled her eyes, letting out a grumbling noise as she followed the girl's instructions. Her wings shot out, spraying water around from the movement. Shadowclaw winced away, Mistyeyes taking the splash without a bat of her eye. She watched nervously, poised to spring to the girl's aid in case she was needed. But Astrid had this, she wasn't going to be stumped by a task as easy as teaching a dragon to fly. She'd flown on Stormfly a million times before, and she'd sat through Hiccup's lectures about dragons way too many times to count. She wouldn't be as good as the boy when it came to things like this, (she'd be the first to admit it) but she'd be able to come pretty darn close.

"Alright, we're going to have to fly back up the cliff. It's pretty high, so you can-" She broke off quickly, eyes widening quickly as she stiffened. There was a voice up on the cliff again. "Get down!" She hissed quickly, Nightflight ducking close to the water as her eyes widened with surprise. The other dragons did the same, looking up and watching the cliff with panicked looks. Yelling erupted up above, Astrid feeling a sense of panic stab deep into her heart as she listened stiffly. The yelling was too quiet for her to make out words, the girl only hearing the muffled sounds of anger and disappointment. Had the others come back? Wouldn't she have heard something if they had all flown back?

Astrid stiffened, closing her eyes as she ducked low to Nightflight's frame. Her heart pounded unevenly, throbbing in her ears as she waited for whoever was up there to leave. But they didn't. The girl peeked up from her hiding spot, watching the sky carefully, trying to see if it was more than one person. But she couldn't figure it out, she was too far down. Maybe it was Snotlout? Somebody from the group trying to find her and figure out more of the story? The image seemed to fit, and Astrid slowly straightened, a frown pulling down the

edges of her lips. Could she chance something like that? It would be risky; what if it wasn't somebody like that? What if it was a stray Viking coming back to reevaluate the area? Maybe they saw something the others didn't and came back alone.

But if it was just one person, she'd be able to get around them, right?

She took in a slow breath, forcing her heart to slow down, to stop racing. She knew what she needed to do. "Alright." She whispered, turning back to take in the others that were gathered around her by now. "We're going to be quick with this one." She said firmly. "Otherwise everything will fall apart. But it's falling apart now, so I guess there's no changing anything." She looked down at Nightflight, tone getting a littler sharper as she addressed her. "You got that, Nightflight?" She demanded. "You have to do what I say, or we're all going to die." She sighed listlessly, dropping her hands with a thump onto the dragoness's neck. "No pressure." She huffed, almost talking to herself as she rolled her eyes.

Mistyeyes was first to move, beating her wings in a gradual rhythm as she climbed up into the air. Her blue eyes flashed up to the cliff, the dragoness looking to be in a thoughtful state as she tilted her head to the side. "Alright, Nightflight." Astrid hissed, leaning over so that she was speaking in the Night Fury's ear. The waves slapped against the quartet, getting angrier and angrier the longer they stayed. Looking up at the clouds, Astrid bit her lower lip as she saw that it looked like rain. Or more precisely, a storm. Which was just what they needed right now.

Sighing to herself, Astrid shook her head to clear it, grabbing hold of the base of Nightflight's neck. The Night Fury perked at this, but didn't flip her off or anything of that nature. Which was most likely a good thing, in Astrid's opinion. Deciding that it would be easier than walking her through everything, Astrid tightened her hold on the dragon, pulling back on her neck as she angled the Night Fury upwards. Nightflight complied, surprisingly, wings copying the rhythm of Mistyeyes as she gained altitude little by little. Shadowclaw followed the movements until they were all hovering a few feet above the water.

Astrid looked up at the cliff one last time, giving her a chance to just back down. They could just wait until whoever was up there left. But she shook her head fixedly, locking her jaw backwards firmly. The longer they stayed in one place, the more likely they would be found. The dragons couldn't hover like this forever, and if Astrid stayed a moment longer in that water, she'd turn into an iceberg. Taking in a slow, deep breath, Astrid gave a small nod. "Alright, guys." She said, leaning forward and willing Nightflight up. The dragon was a little slow on the directions, but she grasped it after a moment of brief confusion, turning up and starting in the ascent. "We have to do this fast."

Mistyeyes suddenly shot ahead of her, Astrid letting out a surprised gasping noise as she started. Shadowclaw let out a yip, increasing his pace as he tried to catch up with her. "Wait!" Astrid yelled, not even trying to be quiet by now. "Slow down, you two! W-We're in this together!" She pushed up and down on Nightflight, willing her to be faster. If she lost those two, she was in deep trouble. Nightflight growled in reply, but pushed herself harder, shooting up from the

water and rocketing after the others. Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw turned up ahead, landing on the cliff and disappearing from sight.

Astrid's eyes narrowed furiously, teeth grinding together. _They're going to get us killed. _She thought ruefully. Nightflight continued to fly up, ears slicked down to her head as she tried to pinpoint the location of the others. When they got high enough, Astrid yanked sharply to the left on Nightflight's neck, steering her like somebody would a horse. Immediately she reacted, twisting in midair and veering over to the rock face. She flew until she felt her feet scrape against the rock of the cliff, the dragon jolting with surprise. But then she relaxed, wings tucking themselves firmly against her sides as she dug her claws into the ground. She skidded for a few seconds, spinning slightly in her crazy landing. Finally, she lost her momentum, coming to a stop as she straightened, blinking rapidly.

If Astrid didn't know her any better, she would have thought there was a hint of pride in the dragoness's sightless eyes.

"Are you guys mental?" Astrid demanded, slipping off of Nightflight's slippery back as she staggered rather ungraciously onto the ground. She recovered without hesitation, drawing herself up to a turn and glare in the dragon's direction. "You could have gotten us all killed! I have half a mind to-" She broke off, eyes widening with shock. Toothless stood beside Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw, the two Night Furies eyeing the girl with amusement. As if they were saying: 'Go ahead. Finish that sentence.' Toothless looked at Astrid with a start, relief seeming to flood through the dragon as he visibly loosened. Ludi was perched the dragon's back, tail curling up happily as she called out a meow of greeting.

Astrid's heart immediately picked up, blue eyes shining as her eyes went every which way, trying to see where Hiccup was. Was he okay? Did Toothless get him? Obviously he did, otherwise he wouldn't be here! "Right? He had to be okay! But the longer she looked, the more she was unable to catch sight of her Viking, coming up short as she let her hands swing loosely down to her sides. She blinked slowly, feeling disappointment like a club as she felt her breath whoosh out of her. She frowned, feeling her eyes start to burn and prick with pain. "oh" She murmured, voice small as she clasped her hands together in front of her tightly. "I guess-"

But suddenly a weight crashed into her from behind. Arms found their way around the girl's chest, embracing her so tight that she thought she would lose blood circulation. But they let go as quickly as they had come in the first place, the person who had done it stepping around her, greeting her with a wide, sloppy grin. "There you are!" Hiccup laughed, relief written in every feature on the boy's face. Astrid stared at him with wide eyes, unable to form a sentence for once as she looked at him. He blinked rapidly, catching sight of her odd look. "Are you okay?" He asked, looking around as if he expected a million Vikings to suddenly start to ambush them. "Is something wrong?"

Astrid acted without a second thought, drawing her arm back in a perfect ninety-degree angle before ramming it forward. She punched Hiccup as hard as she's ever managed to punch anybody before, right smack in the arm. The boy gaped, actually being thrown backwards from the force of it. But, he was Hiccup. A gust of wind would probably be

able to throw him backwards. He skidded backwards on the rock, eyes wide and accusing as he glared up at Astrid.

The blonde paced forward stiffly, eyes daggers as she gave Hiccup a death-glare. "I hate you." She snarled angrily, hands balling into fists at her sides. At Hiccup's confused look, Astrid went on angrily: "Do you have any idea how worried I was?" She shrieked. "I couldn't find you anywhere! And then I had to get Fishlegs to throw Snotlout into the ocean!" Hiccup blinked rapidly at this. "And then I had to do everything without you! We almost got caught, like a million times! I hope you're happy!" She sighed heavily, reluctantly reaching out and offering her hand with a roll of her eyes. "Next time you wanna disappear for the afternoon, you have to alert me beforehand."

Hiccup smiled, giving a small laugh as he reached up, grasping the girl's hand gratefully as he pulled himself with a grimace. Shaking off the pain for the moment at hand, he gave another laugh, green eyes glittering as he looked at the blonde. "Sound like somebody needs me." He teased lightly, watching as the girl's cheeks flamed red at the comment. But Astrid just sighed, shaking her head back and forth for a moment. Her shoulders shook with suppressed laughter as she did so, seeming to find something very amusing. Hiccup frowned, but she spoke up finally, voice riddled with small giggles.

"I'll always need you, you idiot." She laughed.

Hiccup's eyes softened.

"Hey." Mistyeyes spoke up, Hiccup jumping as he looked back over at her. "I really hate to be the Debby-Downer right now but we kinda don't have a lot of time." She said dryly. Toothless perked, looking a little put-out at the harsh tone she had adopted. But Mistyeyes paid no heed, nodding over to Nightflight, who was kneading the ground anxiously where she stood. "I suppose you'd like to watch her head come off?" She asked sarcastically, only half-joking as she looked at the two.

Hiccup blew out his cheeks at the dragon, letting the air out in a small huff. "We gotta get going." He said, turning back to Astrid. The blonde blinked, blue eyes flickering in between Mistyeyes and Hiccup, a flash of suspicion in her eyes. But she shrugged without giving any kind of comment, dropping Hiccup's hand from her own and letting her arm fall back to her side. Hiccup blinked, scanning the sky for a moment before speaking up. "Where do you think would be safest for a new hiding spot?" He asked, surprising the girl. Catching her expression, he shrugged. "I mean- we can't just stay here. And this hiding spot isn't doing so hot, it looks like." His voice grew slightly bitter at this, and Astrid frowned.

But she dodged the question, Hiccup looking as though he'd rather not talk. "How about somewhere on the island?" She suggested. "Your father is looking somewhere off of Berk because of the way you landed a few hours ago. If we go the opposite way that he's thinking, then he'll never be able to find us."

Hiccup turned to the island, eyes narrowed with thought as he surveyed the mass of land. "Alright." He said simply, voice low. "It makes sense."

Astrid rolled her eyes, doing a dramatic curtsey in response.

"But we'll have to be careful." Hiccup mumbled.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

It took forever to find the perfect spot. Forever being an understatement. The two kids had gone through every nook and cranny of the island they could without meeting any other people. They'd gone from the head of the island, to the tail, always tense and worried as they looked over their shoulders. They could be caught at any moment, and with their sometimes-noisy traveling, it was enough to grant them each heart attacks. The cove would always be the prime place for them to rest, perfect and enclosed. Perfect if you wanted to be found, though. Everybody knew that this was the place Hiccup had spent with Toothless when he kept the dragon safe. It would have made sense for the Vikings to be checking that spot. So they had to skirt around the hiding spot, Hiccup looking back with a yearning look as he passed their old spot.

So they walked on for a few hours, Nightflight being led (surprisingly) by Astrid. The girl had rested her hand lightly on top of the dragon's neck, steering her along with a tactic that Hiccup hadn't thought of, alarmingly. Nightflight didn't seem to mind the girl either, it looked like. She followed Astrid gratefully, looking worn out and tired from the long trek. Hiccup had watched the Night Fury with concern, knowing that she would be the first to give out, but the last to admit so. They had to find shelter before Nightflight couldn't go on any longer. Before it was too late.

Finally, they came to the very edge of Berk. Not many Vikings came to the place, finding the rocky terrain and forested area much too cluttered to deal with. Which was perfect. Hiccup remembered how he had found this place when he was little, the way that he would sneak away for hours on end to explore the area. He had found many interesting things here at the edge of the island, but the most amazing thing he had discovered was ringing in the teen's mind as he clambered over the boulders and pebbles. "If I remember this place right, it should be somewhere over here." He had said, skirting around a stunted tree as he ducked underneath the overhanging branches.

"That was ages ago." Astrid had huffed angrily, doing her best to help Nightflight through the tough land. "What if you emphasized your memory?" She asked frostily.

"Well, then we're in a lot of trouble." Hiccup had flashed back, not bothering to turn back and look at her. But he could feel the irritation sparking off the blonde. She had a point. If Hiccup was thinking about something that didn't exist, he was going to get an earful from just about everyone here. He could feel the tight atmosphere around them, tension crackling like lightning between the party members. They were all tired and sore; if they didn't get to where they were going, somebody was going to flip out. Possibly more than one person.

But finally Hiccup had found it. The biggest tree on the island. At least, from the way it look. It was a large pine tree. The branches went outwards, the pine needles drooping in a curtain-like fashion as they were swept to the side from the wind. Hiccup had gone forward,

reaching out and brushing aside one of the largest branches to reveal a hollowed-out space inside. From the outside of the pine tree, it looked like it was just a normal tree. This way they could be better protected from the storm, and harder to find to others if any happened to stroll by. It might be a tight fit for all of them to squeeze inside, but it was better than nothing.

Which left them here. All huddled together on the floor of a hollowed pine tree, listening as the storm outside started to pick up into a roar. Surprisingly, there was enough room inside; or at least more room than Hiccup had first anticipated. The dragons were curled up together on one side, refusing to speak as they stared back at one another. Astrid was hovering over the group anxiously, trying to find any injuries or things of that nature. Hiccup sat across from them, on the other side of the trunk. He looked out in between the needles, looking glumly out into the storm as he drew his knees close to his chest. His green eyes were weighted down at he looked out, his bangs drooping over his eyes tiredly.

A set of footsteps came closer, Astrid settling herself down beside him as she leaned forward. "You did good." She said, giving him a small smile. "I thought that this thing was a figment of your weird imagination. Looks like I was wrong." She gave another laugh, but her smile faded as Hiccup didn't do the same. "You okay?" She asked, blue eyes widening slightly. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"Not really." Hiccup sighed wearily, green eyes darting away from her prying blue ones.

"What happened?" Astrid asked anyway. "When you were gone, I mean."

"It was my dad." He explained tiredly, for the second time. "I told him about Nightflight, but he didn't believe me. He locked me inside the house. If Toothless hadn't gotten me, I'd probably still be in there."

"What, did he disown you again?" Astrid said, trying to make a joke.

"You know, sometimes I sit back and wonder why you say things like that." Hiccup said simply.

"Me too." Astrid said quickly, realizing that she had struck a nerve with that one. _Stupid. _She reached out, putting a comforting hand on Hiccup's shoulder as she gave him an encouraging smile. "It'll be okay." She assured him. "As soon as this storm is over, we'll have a way to show your dad. Just like we did before." Hiccup blinked, raising his eyes to meet her's. The glum look was still on his face though, it was like he was trying to force himself to believe her words. Astrid's smile wavered slightly, the girl sighing. "We'll get through this." She said. "_You'll _get through this. You always do."

"That's the thing." Hiccup said thickly. "Sometimes I'm just waiting for my luck to run out like it always does." He paused for a moment before ducking his head. He closed his eyes tightly, shaking his head. "Maybe this is when it finally does, Astrid. Maybe we're just kidding ourselves in thinking that this mess could ever be able to be sorted out." He said.

"Don't say that!" She said firmly, blue eyes firing up at the thought. "Don't ever say that again. Because if you give up, this whole thing will be for nothing." She sighed, scooting closer to him. "You're not alone in this, as much as you want to believe you are." She said. "I'm here, and so is everybody else. I won't leave you again, if you won't leave me again. We're in on this together, and no matter what, we're going to pull through on it. Okay?"

Hiccup looked up, saddened look lifting slightly at her words. "How do you know?" He asked.

"Because I know you." She pressed. She leaned forward, wrapping the boy in a tight embrace. Hiccup hesitated a moment before doing the same, arms circling around Astrid and holding her close. "Everything will work out perfectly." She comforted him. "And no matter what happens, I'll be with you, okay?"

Hiccup smiled, drawing back and giving her a grateful look. "Okay." He replied.

The sound of rain started leak through their canopy, Astrid making a face at the noise. But then she gave out a huff. "Sounds like we'll be here for a while." She said, a clap of thunder booming off in the distance as she commented. "I'm going to go to sleep." She said with a small smirk on her face. "Nearly drowning can really make a person tired." She leaned over, giving Hiccup a small peck on the cheek before pushing herself up, walking away a few paces until she found a good place to lay down. Nowhere where you could get poked by branches or stung by needles.

Hiccup turned, watching as she settled herself down on the ground, turning so that his back was to him as she curled up into a tight ball. The boy sighed, changing his gaze so that it was trained on the ocean outside. The dragons off the side had taken to keeping watch, Toothless looking left and Mistyeyes watching right. Shadowclaw kept his ears perked a little lazily, eyes drooping in on themselves as he staggered. It was clear that he was going to fall asleep soon, whether he wanted to or not. Nightflight was off the edge of the group, looking down at the ground emptily, looking as though she was dozing off. That, or deep in thought.

Whichever one it was, Hiccup didn't want to interrupt her.

He watched off seaward instead, thoughts mulling together like the gears that had been Toothless's old tail.

Hiccup, you're obviously confused. _

As Chief, I'm responsible for the safety of everybody here! You should learn that lesson before it's too late!_

I'm not wasting any more lives, Hiccup!_

I want you to go to the house. And I want you to stay there._

The boy closed his eyes tightly, shooing the voices away stubbornly. He had to remember what Astrid had told him. This wasn't all for nothing! There was a reason for this! It wouldn't be wasting any more lives, it would be saving them in the long run! Everything in his

story was perfectly sane, he was taking into consideration everybody in the island, knowing at the same time that he couldn't just leave Nightflight alone. The way that they could live together was ideal, of course. Nothing was blemished or scarred in an odd way.

â€|Right?

â€|Then why did he feel so guilty? So unprepared?

He started at a sharp clacking noise, perking as he turned around swiftly. Astrid was shivering where she was, presumably asleep. Her form twitched and shook where she lay sprawled on the ground, her teeth chattering loudly. The boy could hear it from where he sat. Pushing himself up to his feet, Hiccup ignored his injuries, turning and making his way over to her. He crouched down beside her, tilting his head with confusion as he looked at the shivering Viking. _What did she say about nearly drowning? Was she in the water?_

It was a rare occurrence when he was smarter than Astrid. Even he knew that nobody went in Berk's ocean. It was like jumping into a snowdrift and saying: "Hm, I quite like it in here. I think I'll stay."

He rolled his eyes, smiling as he shrugged out of his wool vest. Leaning forward, Hiccup draped the piece of clothing tightly around the blonde, watching as her shivering subsided a little bit. But she was still trembling in her sleep, hair slicked down wetly to her forehead. Hiccup stepped over her with care, sitting on her left side and pausing for a moment. But then he leaned backwards, settling himself down beside her, trying not to bump her or lay down on her. He turned on his side, green eyes soft as he looked at the sleeping girl.

Reaching over, Hiccup moved closer, draping an arm around her frame and pulling her a little closer. The girl shivered at the sudden warmth, shivers slowly fading away as Hiccup held her against himself. Finally, she relaxed, unconsciously tucking herself closer as she let out light snores. Hiccup blinked rapidly, but just smiled once again. Closing his eyes himself, Hiccup rested his cheek against the top of her head, feeling the exhaustion from the day catch up to him. Sleep started to drag him under, a foggy feeling filling his head.

The memories of the last few hours lingered on the edges of his mind, pressing forward and threatening nightmares.

But he finally managed to shrug them off.

He was going to try and listen to what Astrid had said for once.

Everything will work out perfectly. And no matter what happens, I'll be with you.

Okay?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **You're not alone, together we stand.**

****I'll be by your side, you know I'll take your hand.****

****When it gets cold, and it feels like the end, there's no place to go, you know I won't give in.****

****No, I won't give in.****

Keep Holding On - Avril Lavigne

TASTE DUR FLUFFEH. LURVE DUR FLUFFEH.

I told you I was eating cotton candy, guys. Gosh.

Next chapter will be between the dragons, so you all have that to look forward to ;)

Me: -writing last half of the story, minding my own business-

Sister: -comes over, reading what I type, as she does all the time- Hey.

Me: What? O3o

Sister: Hey. You know what would be so awesome?

Me: What? -.-

Sister: A Lemon Scene.

Me: LAUREN, GET OUT.

41. Chapter 41

A/N: It's nice to know that I have such good taste in music! I've heard thatâ€¦from multiple reviewers! LOL

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The wind and rain had picked up outside their makeshift home, the pine tree's needles bending low against the force of the gusts. Water lashed at the leaves, Toothless watching wearily as they were stripped from the bark underneath the strain. Thunder clapped loudly in the distance, shaking the island with its booming echo as the dragon winced away. His green eyes turned slightly worried, the Night Fury turning and looking over at Hiccup and Astrid with a concerned look. But the two were still fast asleep, dead to the world and even deaf to the storm raging around them. They were curled up together for warmth, neither of them even flicking an eyelid at the noises ravaging the island. It was impressive and yet jolting at the same time.

Wings twitching with nervousness at his sides, Toothless started forward, picking his way through the den as he made for the two teens. Maneuvering in the somewhat-cramped space was difficult enough; it pretty much multiplied in difficulty when you were a dragon. Branches and needles poked at him uncomfortably as he tried his best to swerve around them, an irritated growl rumbling in his

throat as his green eyes flared. Ducking and skirting, he rounded the thick trunk of the tree, leaning down and hovering over the pair of kids with a small coo.

His green eyes roved them carefully, trying to pick out new or worsened injuries. After everything that had happened up to now, Toothless was worried that Hiccup had reopened one of his wounds from before. Or that Astrid had split open her side from her fall into the ocean, and she was just too proud to admit it. Putting his nose down until it was almost touching Hiccup's side, Toothless weighed them both with a grim look on his face.

Astrid sported a new gash on her cheek, though it had stopped bleeding a long time ago, it looked. She looked fine except for the new shade of pale that her skin had adopted after her supposed fall into the ocean. Her hair was still a little wet, and the water was leaking through the tops of the tree wasn't really doing much to help her damp state. The girl let out an occasional shiver every once and a while, but Hiccup must have taken away a lot of the cold with his own self.

Though with the two so close together, Toothless couldn't get a good look at Hiccup, which made him all the more anxious. Plus, Ludi was curled up close to the boy's shoulder, her head tucked into the boy's neck as she snored lightly. Toothless gave a small sigh, ears flattening to his head as he looked at Hiccup despairingly. The boy had made it clear that he wanted the others to get a good sleep in before they tried the next phase of their plan. But how could Toothless let himself go to sleep when he wasn't sure at all whether or not Hiccup was in pain? He kneaded his paws against the ground in a flustered fashion, frowning as he looked this way and that; the dragon looked as though he were trying to find a solution to his newfound problem. But all that he saw was the sleeping form of Mistyeyes, light snores coming from the dragoness as she curled up a little tighter to herself.

Wait a minute—where was Nightflight? Toothless straightened, blinking rapidly as he scanned the area around himself with a suddenly surge of panic. Had she wandered off or something? Cursing the gods, Toothless started to rush forward, branches and twigs stabbing into his sides as he did so. If Nightflight had gone off by herself, she was a goner. She'd walk off the edge of Berk and take a sharp tumble down into the ocean. Then what would Hiccup say!? He'd be furious! He'd be shocked! He'd be—

"I'm still here." A sudden voice sighed from behind. Toothless stopped short, starting as he whirled around, heart pounding against his ribcage. His green eyes immediately locked with another pair, the dragon's eyes landing on Nightflight with a rush of relief. He staggered slightly, feeling the tension leave his shoulders altogether as he saw her. The night was so dark that she almost blended in completely with the black sky, only her thin outline visible underneath the cloudy moon. Her ears flicked back and forth, Toothless blinking at the movement. Was she angry?

But then he realized that her whole body was twitching. She shivered every so often, from trembling as she shuffled her legs closer to her body self-consciously. Toothless hesitated a moment, awkwardness crackling like lightning between the two dragons. But finally he forced his voice into action, speaking up and breaking the silence as

best he could. "Are you cold?" He asked softly, wincing a little as he spoke. Not for the first time, he thanked his lucky stars that she was unable to see anymore. It was bad enough that he had to be with her again; if she could see how worked up he was because of it, he would probably try and throw himself off the nearest cliff. If only to get out of his embarrassment.

"No." She asked, voice low as she looked down at the ground. She gave another shiver, closing her eyes tightly as she ducked her head down to her chest. Toothless's mouth pulled down into a much more worried frown as he studied her carefully. She kept on shivering, but the Night Fury realized that it wasn't from the cold. She was scared. The first thought that he had was to roll his eyes, feeling irritation at her incompetence build like a wall in the back of his throat. But as he stared at her, the feeling melted rapidly, as fast as ice did when placed in full view of the sun.

Of course she was scared; she had every right to be. She was blinded, without any way of seeing whatever was going on around them. She was confused and shocked, having to concentrate twice as hard as everyone else to perform the simplest tasks. This, accompanied with the fact that the only hope of surviving was with people that weren't sure at all about her, it seemed like she had a legitimate reason to be frightened. Swallowing back the words that had been lining up on his tongue, he forced them out of his thoughts. Instead, he made his voice much gentler than before, sitting down carefully and eyeing Nightflight as he spoke.

"Are you okay?" He asked.

But Nightflight merely let out a small laugh. "That's an odd question for you to ask." She commented. Toothless started to bristle uncomfortably, but blanched as he saw a small gleam of amusement in her cloudy eyes. Outside, lightening struck itself across the sky, lighting up the night and casting a beam of white across the pair, making it seem like midmorning instead of midnight. Toothless winced, already sensing the incoming explosion before it happened. Almost as soon as he did, thunder ripped across the sky, making the dragon's teeth rattle with its sharp boom. But Nightflight hadn't expected it, jerking backwards with surprise as she fell over with a squeak.

Toothless straightened, ears perking with shock at the sudden movement. Nightflight had fallen right through the screen of the pine tree, falling into the mud outside of it with an amplified sucking noise. The rain immediately soaked her head to toe, Toothless watching with a sense of awkward humor as she picked herself up, spitting out the wet dirt with a groan of disgust. She turned with difficulty, grimacing as another shock of thunder rolled across the hills. Staggering her way back inside the tree, she shrugged herself underneath the drooping branches, doing her best to shake herself off without spraying a lot of water around to the people that were still asleep. Frankly, Toothless wondered how in the world anybody could sleep through a gale such as this.

Nightflight sat down with a heavy thud, ears slicking back to her head as she dug her claws into the ground. Toothless started forward, already feeling waves of sadness leaving the dragoness as she hunched her shoulders tightly. But she spoke up first, stopping the male in his tracks. "I must look so pathetic to you, now." She managed, eyes

glistening with pain and misery as she looked up at him. Her sightless eyes bored into his own, causing the dragon to momentarily forget she was blinded. She stared at him for so long, that Toothless started to expect himself to be drawn into her, just like he always was. But this was a different kind of stare; Nightflight merely looked at him with longing, begging him to understand her case. But Toothless realized that it didn't matter. Her stare was memorizing either way. Finally, she turned away with a sigh, flicking a piece of mud off of her paw with an irritated expression. "I've gone from a strong Night Fury to jumping from little noises like thunder." A disappointed scowl overcame her face. "I'm the equivalent of a Terrible Terror now."

"No you aren't." Toothless assured her, though his voice betrayed him a little. Nightflight started, looking over at him with a put-out expression. "You're just a little overwhelmed. It can't be easyâ€¦to make a turnaround like this. I know that it was for me."

"You were different." Nightflight objected sorrowfully. "The only regret you did to Berk was knock down a tower. I was a monster." She turned towards the noise of the rain drumming against the ground outside, wings twitching with unrest. She hesitated a moment, looking as if she were going to say something as she opened her mouth. But it was a moment before she found the words. "â€¦Maybe I still am a monster." She said softly, Toothless's head tilting to the side with concern. "After allâ€¦" She turned around, gaze falling near the spot that Hiccup was sound asleep. She was a little off, but by the look on her face, Toothless wasn't about to tell her that. "I'm putting all of you through so much. I've put Hiccup through so much. All for my own personal benefit." She shook her head slowly. "I don't deserve any of this."

"Of course you do." Toothless said bracingly, shocking himself by the quick assurance. Nightflight started, looking as surprised as he was by the words of encouragement. Shaking his head to clear it, Toothless went on rapidly, trying to cover up his small bout of bemusement. "I mean- Hiccup surely thinks that you do. Otherwise we wouldn't be out here huddled under a tree in the pouring rain." He'd meant it as a joke, but the sad look overcame Nightflight's face again. Sighing mentally, he tried again. "We're all in this together now Nightflight. No matter what happened before. You did a lot of things, I'll be the first to admit it. But you also saved Hiccupâ€¦a lot of times, if I got what you told me right."

Nightflight hadn't gone into too much detail about what had happened before, skimming over things quickly in the rushed time frame that they had to talk back on the cliff. But taking what she told him, accompanied with the things that he had seen, he came to the conclusion that Hiccup would be dead by now if it weren't for her. Grudgingly, Toothless had accepted her rescues as a form of apologies for now. It would have to suffice until he could fully grasp everything that had happened between the period that Hiccup had been dragged away, to the point that Mistyeyes carted the unconscious boy back to Berk.

"Toothlessâ€¦I wanted to say thank you." She murmured, catching the dragon yet again off-guard. Over to the side, Mistyeyes moved slightly, as if stirring. But Toothless was so engrossed in his conversation with Nightflight that he didn't even notice. Nightflight gave a small shrug with one shoulder, suddenly looking a little

nostalgic. "After everything that I've done to you, you're willing to let me become apart of Berk. It means a lot to me that you would help me so much. I just wish that you could know how bad I feel about the past."

Toothless wilted visibly, ears flicking back and forth a little guiltily. "I can relate, I think." He offered weakly in response. "After all, I did do a few bad things back then, too." He craned his neck as he looked at her a little closer, looking at the scar that lined the female's throat. It was a reminder of the fight that the two had gotten themselves into; back then, Toothless had thought that he had killed her. The thought made a sad pang in his heart. He supposed it was because Hiccup had taken such a good liking to the female. But then again, if he truly had killed her before then, none of this would be happening right now.

He turned, casting a look back at Mistyeyes. She was still curled up into a ball, but it seemed as though she was tighter this time. Was she having a nightmare? Shaking himself, Toothless looked back at Nightflight, blinking slowly. "Mistyeyes was the one to save you, though." He said, watching as Nightflight deflated a little at his words. "If what she told me was true, she healed you before you could die. That means she saved your life."

"Yes, that's true." Nightflight answered, voice a little bitter. "And look how well I repaid her. Casting her off and forcing her to find another home."

"But she found Berk." Toothless pressed, desperate to help her wrap her mind around what he was saying. "Without you sending her off, she wouldn't be aware of all the wonderful things on Berk. She'd just be back with the other Night Furies. You did her a favor, Nightflight. Whether or not she knows that, it doesn't really matter. The point is that you know it." He paused before adding: "And if you think about it, all the things that really matter on this island wouldn't be here without you. Shadowclaw, Mistyeyes, Ludi, all of the wonderful friends that I care about. And that Hiccup cares for too."

"You make me sound like some sort of hero when you put it that way." She stuttered.

Toothless shook his head. "Not a hero. Not like that." He paused. "But I'm just saying that we have a lot to be grateful for you. As long as we take the good along with the bad, you're a dragon just like the rest of us. You have faults and pasts just like every other dragon does on this island. So that makes you the same as the lot. You deserve a place here, and all we're trying to do is to get everybody else to understand that."

Nightflight studied the ground blindly, voice riddled with sadness. "Still." She said simply. "I feel awful. About everything. About what I put Hiccup and the rest of Berk through all those months." She said nothing for a heartbeat. But then: "About what I put you through." Her words next were softer, much more subdued as she refused to look up at him. Toothless jerked backwards, as if slapped as he blinked rapidly with surprise. He had expected a lot of things to come from her mouth. But not anything like this. He thought that Nightflight hated him as much as he hated her. Or at least what how much he had thought that he hated her.

He opened his mouth to say something, but Nightflight said something first. "I think about it all the time." She blurted out, eyes closed tightly as she talked rapidly. Her words slurred together in a rambling rush, making it almost hard to understand. "The way we parted ways. I look back on that night all the time, wishing that I could have done something different. I wish that I could have kept you with me." Her ears slicked back to her head, turning her wide green eyes onto Toothless as she willed him to listen.

Toothless did not reply. Over to the other side of the tree, Mistyeyes flinched closer to herself, back to the pair as her blue eyes widened with pain.

When Toothless remained mute, Nightflight pressed in a rasp: "Did you ever look back?"

Minutes pass spent in silence. Toothless staring over at Nightflight, and vice versa. Thunder drummed off in the distance, rain lashing at the branches of the tree in a more rapid pattern than before. The storm was getting bigger, even when it was thought to have not been able to get even worse. Toothless listen to the rain, watching as jagged lines of lightening sliced their ways through the sky. But then he finally found his voice, feeling suddenly numb than he had before. "I do." He said softly, voice sort of fuzzy.

Nightflight straightened, eyes lighting up considerably.

"I mean I did." He corrected himself, feeling himself stiffen with a tense kind of feeling. Nightflight blinked, titling her head to the side as her sudden burst of happiness slowly ebbed away to be replaced by confusion. "Now I don't really focus on it anymore. I think the faster we get past whatever happened before now, the better off we'll be." Nightflight's face fell, but Toothless kept on talking. "Everybody here besides you have gotten a second chance, so it's your turn to be able to make up for past mistakes."

Instead of taking his praise with comfort, Nightflight shook her head. "You know that isn't what I meant." She said in a whisper.

Toothless shifted uncomfortably. "Maybe I did." He conceded. "But Toothless turned slightly, green eyes going over to land on Mistyeyes. "A lot of things have changed, Nightflight. Too much is going on right now, I-I can't-" He broke off, sighing heavily as he turned back to the black Night Fury. "I need time to think about things. There are more pressing matters to decide before I go into any of that."

Nightflight's ears flicked back and forth. "I see." She said, voice tinged with a little disappointment. "And you're right, I guess. But if you're talking about Mistyeyes I wouldn't blame you." Toothless tensed at this, ears swiveling back and forth rapidly as he let his jaw go slack. Nightflight just shrugged listlessly, looking a little hurt. "After all, she never did anything against you. Not as much as I have, anyway."

Mistyeyes's ears flicked backwards, straining to listen to the conversation over the rain outside.

"That's not the point." Toothless explained, rather awkwardly. "It's

like I've been saying for the past ten minutes. Whatever you did beforeâ€|your slate is wiped clean, now. It's like it never happened. I forgot what Mistyeyes made me do to Hiccup, and I'll do the same for you. You two are even, and Iâ€|can't really think about any of that right now. It's too confusing." When Nightflight remained sullen, he went on. "First thing's first, we have to figure out how to make the island warm up to the idea of you. That's the first thing on my priority list. That, and making sure that Hiccup is safe. Maybe when everything calms down I'll be able to think clearer. Until thenâ€|I'm not going to linger on anything."

"I see." Nightflight whispered.

Toothless's green eyes flashed over to survey the storm outside. It was at the peak right now; it didn't look like it would be over anytime soon. "Well." He said, coming out in a small cough. "We should probably get to bed. Hiccup would want us awake and ready to go tomorrow. If he knew that we stayed up all night, he'd be pretty cross." He looked over at the teen as he spoke, eyes managing to soften with affection as he studied the sleeping child. He was so small, and yet he'd proven that what he lacked in height and strength, he made up for in wit. "You shouldn't worry too much." He added quickly. "Hiccup had been through a lot, but it won't stop him from making a place for you at Berk. He knows what he's doing. And Astrid does, too."

Nightflight gave a small smile at what he said, suddenly warming up considerably. "Yeah." She agreed with a nod. "I know that they'll do all they can. And it's more than I deserve. I like that Astrid girl, she reminds me of someone. I just don't know who."

It was a heartbeat before he said anything. "It's you." Toothless explained, inclining his head towards her. Nightflight looked surprised at the statement, then thoughtful as she tilted her head to the right. "At leastâ€|she reminds me a lot of you. You both are stubborn at times, and you both have a past that's completely unlike what you are now. Astrid used to be the top dragon-killer in the class, and she would always have a spare time to downgrade Hiccup and tell him how much he didn't matter." Nightflight's mouth weighted down at the edges, the dragon looked sad at the newfound knowledge. "But Hiccup eventually managed to turn her around. And now they're pretty much inseparable. I guess that's why you're able to relate to her."

"I feel bad." Nightflight said. "About her dragon. How it can't fly anymore."

"Astrid looked like she was doing a decent job of riding you a few hours ago. And steering you through the forest."

"And?"

Toothless gave a shrug. "I don't know." He said. "I'm just thinking that maybe it'd be possible for Astrid to have two dragons. She could use you to fly and just take care of Stormfly normally." Nightflight straightened at this, looking oddly hopeful as Toothless went on. "After all: Shadowclaw, Mistyeyes, and I are all kind of Hiccup's dragons. You can have more than one dragon at a time. But it'd be her choice anyway. That's just another thing that we can't know for sure until this is all figured out."

Nightflight nodded, Toothless once again painfully aware of the awkward tension in the air.

"Wellâ€¦I'm going to try and get some sleep. You should too." He offered.

"Alright." Nightflight sighed, stare lingering on Toothless a moment more before she turned, settling down on the ground with a small grimace. She tucked her wings closer to herself, closing her eyes with a snap and ducking her head closer to herself. She didn't say anything more. She didn't even look over at him; it was like he wasn't even there. Toothless frowned, feeling somewhat hurt as he looked down at her curled form.

"â€¦'Night." He whispered into the dark.

Nightflight didn't say anything.

The Night Fury turned slowly, looking back and forth a little aimlessly. He looked from Mistyeyes, and then back over to Nightflight. He stood in between them a moment, feeling as if the walls of their shelter were starting to press in on him. He drew himself up quickly, steeling himself. "It doesn't matter." He said aloud, talking to himself. "Not right now. All that matters is what's on hand at the moment." Mistyeyes blinked, nodding mentally as she silently agreed with him. Nightflight stirred at this, eyes downcast as she flattened her ears. Toothless walked forward, going over to Hiccup and laying down beside his human. The heat that normally came off of his body would help Astrid too, she was still a little wet from her fall into the ocean.

Toothless stared down at Hiccup with a downcast look. There was a deep frown on the sleeping boy's face, and the dragon wondered whether or not his human was having a nightmare. Blowing out a huff of air from his nose, Toothless leaned down, pushing his snout comfortingly against his human's wounded shoulder. Hiccup mumbled softly in his sleep at this, but didn't stir, remained asleep as he ducked out of the way of Toothless's reach. The Night Fury cooed softly, pulling back and looking down at the boy anxiously.

He's been through so much.

Please don't let this all be for nothing.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Stoick stood in the middle of Hiccup's room, not knowing whether to be frantically worried, or immensely furious. His hands were clenched at his sides as he stood in the center of the room, eyes narrowed and hands shaking. The place was empty, the only thing besides the normal furniture was a stack of books and other material items. They were all piled on top of Toothless's rock, leading up to the hole in the roof overhead. What had taken place here was obvious. Stoick remembered his son's words clearly as they rang through his head like an incessant alarm. _I won't let you kill her!_He'd escaped, and now he was off who-knows-where.

The Chief part of Stoick was screaming at him to go out and track his son down. He had disobeyed a direct order, he needed to be punished.

He needed to be dragged back to Berk, kicking and screaming, and be put through what every other Viking did that betrayed the island in such a life-threatening manner. Anybody who helps those that nearly wipe Berk off the face of the ocean was a traitor in the eyes of the island. And traitors weren't taken well for Vikings.

But the father part of him said otherwise. Thunder ripped throughout the island, shaking the house back and forth as lightening caused the room to bleach itself white. Rain pounded the walls of the home, a puddle of water already forming on the surface of Toothless's rock. It would spread to a flood if this went on any longer. A mental image of his son out in this kind of weather forced its way into his head. The image of Hiccup sitting, hunched, out in the rain. His green eyes were round with pain as he looked up, the Chief unsure whether it was tears or rain flowing down his cheeks. _Why do you never listen to me?_His voice rang out pathetically.

He couldn't punish his son, could he? He had to. Just because Hiccup was the son of a Chief, did not mean that he got to get off basic threats and rules that were given to the Vikings on the island. He had to make an effort not to show any kind of favoritism, lest he be founded unfair. And he stood by what he said earlier: Hiccup's aiding in the dragon that nearly killed everyone was too far. His son had pressed that it was no different. That the other dragons had made mistakes in the past as well. But no other dragon had done so much as wipe out half the supply of his Vikings.

The man's eyes hardened as he ducked his head slightly.

The dragon deserved to die; it was the only way to ensure Berk's safety.

The party of Vikings that had gone out to search for the Night Fury had been driven back to the island when the storm started to break through the dense layer of clouds. Much to the rapid objections that had been fired at the Chief at the thought of leaving the dragon out there alive, Stoick had finally watched as every single Viking went back inside their homes. He'd watched as mothers corralled their children together, hovering over them anxiously as they snatched worried glances up to the sky. Men gripped their battle axes, following their families with a deathly look on their faces. It was obvious that they were less than satisfied at the lack of a dragon's head, yet Stoick couldn't do anything to help them.

That brought him here. He had gone back to the house, standing outside of Hiccup's room and debating on what to do. After all, he hadn't found the dragon yet. Who knows what could happen if Hiccup found that out while he was alone. He could do something unpredictable again. But, finally, after an hour of silence in the home, Stoick decided that he would bring something up to Hiccup. Food, maybe. Something like that could be considered a truce, after all. He'd loaded up a plate as best he could, went upstairs, opened the door and promptly drop the food all over the ground.

Footsteps outside the door caught the man's attention, and he raised his head, turning towards the noise. Gobber came in after a few more clunking thuds, stopping short with surprise at the sight that met him. "Ay! What's this?" He asked, eyeing the mess that was now strewn across the floor. The water, the food, and the random objects that looked like they'd been thrown haphazardly off from the shelves.

Stoick turned back to look at him, eyes flaming with anger as he met his old friend's gaze. Gobber seemed to realize what was going on at once, but the only thing that changed about his expression was turning into that of concern, not anger.

"Where's Hiccup?" He asked, looking around the room, as if expecting the boy's head to pop up from behind the bed.

"He's gone." Stoick growled, voice surprising him a little at the amount of venom inside it. Gobber blinked rapidly, looking shocked at the statement. "He's gone, and he's probably gone after that dragon to try and rescue it!" He let out a growl, shaking his head back and forth quickly. "We have to find him, Gobber. He needs to be taken back here! He's stupid for trying to do anything like this! Doesn't he learn anything?"

"Now, hang on." Gobber said, taking a few paces forward. He held out his arms in front of him, as if in surrender as he tried to calm down the Chief. "Maybe Hiccup just went somewhere else, you don't-"

"I know my own son!" Stoick interrupted harshly. "I know the ridiculous ideas that get into his head!"

"Some of them aren't that ridiculous, Stoick. You should try and see-"

"He's gone for that dragon, and now we'll have to track him down as well." Stoick's eyes flashed at this, and his jaw locked backwards with bottled-up fury. "Sometimes I wish that Hiccup would know when to stop. He makes a mess of everything he does, Gobber, you and I both know that." Gobber's eyes hardened at this, and he opened his mouth to reply a sharp retort. But Stoick went on before he could get the chance. "He'd going to make just another huge mess for me to clean up."

"Stoick-"

"Why can't he listen to me?" Stoick demanded, whirling around to look back at Gobber. The blonde jerked backwards at the sudden volume, eyes widening considerably. "I tell him to do something, I give him a direct order! And he deliberately disobeys me! Does he like to see me like this? Angry, andâ€¦and worried!?" He paused for a moment, shaking his head. Then he muttered: "â€¦I can't keep doing this, Gobber. I can't keep losing grip of him and watching him do these foolish things." Rain pattered on the roof, the only sound for a moment as Gobber looked at his friend sadly. Nobody said anything, a drum roll of thunder clapping in the distance.

Stoick turned, looking at the pile of discarded objects. He thought of his son, wounded as he was, gathering up all the material and stacking them carefully, face creased with pain and concentration. The thought almost made the man stagger, a thought entering his mind with a cruel sort of ring. _Is it all my fault?_ He wondered. But his eyes hardened almost at once, the man's hands curling into tight fists at his hips. "No." He said firmly, answering his own question. Gobber blinked, looking a little awkward as he stood off to the side. He looked at Stoick with a kind of concern, unsure of what he should do in the situation.

The Chief turned to face Gobber, eyes flashing. "Once the storm is

over, we're going out again. As soon as possible." He ordered firmly, leaving no room for argument. Gobber hesitated a moment, but gave a tense nod in reply. "We're going to sweep the island one last time. Hiccup couldn't have gotten far, he must be taking shelter somewhere. We have to find him." Gobber looked at the man's expression with alarm, wondering what he was thinking. The sudden urge to find Hiccup—the large burst of anger that rocketed from him so unusually. What was going on? What was going to happen?

"Stoick, are ya sure that—"

"It's an order, Gobber." Stoick snapped a little harshly, fixing the man with a firm look. "The island is in more and more danger the longer we stand here. The moment the storm passes, we're going to be on the move. Gather up the men when it starts to die down. I want to be searching the island before sunrise."

"B-Before—?"

"That's what I said." Stoick said coldly, turning and brushing by the man quickly. Gobber turned, looking still shocked as he watched the Chief stomp down the hall. Stoick paused a moment before turning, eyes unnaturally cold as he looked back. "We're going to kill that dragon, Gobber." He said, sounding much more than sure of himself. "It's the only way that the island will truly be safe. We fell for its tricks once already, and look where it got us." He shook his head. "The only way to ensure Berk's safety is for its head on a stick."

Gobber suddenly glared over his friend. "And what about Hiccup?" He asked.

Stoick stared back at him heavily for a moment, jaw slack as he searched for something to say. Gobber couldn't help but remember the last time that Hiccup had gone against his father's wishes. Escaped and done something against the rules. It had turned out right last time, after a minor bump in the road. Did Stoick forget that? And if he did—what would the bump in the road be this time? Would it be something worse?

Stoick finally turned away, not replying as he went down the steps and down into the kitchen. Gobber was alone.

He didn't know who to believe. Hiccup had been right before. But his father made a point.

Berk would be in mortal danger if the—thing—that had made this whole mess still lingered around the land.

Common sense rested with each one.

And yet one was held in a confident chief that had been trusted for years—and the other, in the arms of an underweight Viking that had only proven himself right once.

He shook his head slowly back and forth, letting out a small sigh. "It's a right mess." He stated to nobody in particular. "I'm not sure what to do."

The only reply was a boom of thunder in the distance, ominous and

menacing as it foretold danger.

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A/N: **Hey. Don't write yourself off yet.**

It's only in your head you feel left outâ€|or looked down on.

Just try your best. Try everything you can.

And don't you worry what they tell themselvesâ€|when you're away.

The Middle - Jimmy Eat World.

If there ever was a song for Toothless and Nightflightâ€|or Hiccup and Nightflight, but that's a little weird, so I wont go there.
:P

This chapter is mainly here to show both time passing, and the way that Toothless and Nightflight got to talk once more. I hope I get a lot of reviews from this one! We're SO close to a whopping 700! I CANNOT believe it! Thanks SO much, you guys! I love you! Seriously!
;D

42. Chapter 42

A/N: Thanks for the reviews, yet again! :D

Sorry I didn't get this out to you earlier. EOC's start next week, so y'all better brace yourselves.

If you're lost and alone

And you're sinking like a stoneâ€|carry on

May your past be the sound of your feet upon the ground

Carry on, carry on.

FUN - Carry On

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The morning eventually dawned over the large island of Berk. And with it, came the freezing winds and damp air. The grass was weighted down with thick drops of water, causing clothes to stick with a disgusting feeling to your skin, and the air to smell humid and green. The sun that was slowly climbing farther and farther up into the sky, and yet it did nothing at all to chase away the stifling-cold winds that racked the smudge of land with freezing gusts. Hiccup's green eyes blinked open slowly, the boy wincing at once as he ducked away from the glare of sunlight that met him.

He'd do a million other things right now than wake up.

He let out a small grumble of irritation, closing his eyes and curling up closer to himself. Astrid rolled over unconsciously,

moving away from him as she tossed in her sleep. The movement caused her to tumble a few feet away from him, a newfound crease appearing in the boy's forehead as he lost a lot of the warmth that he had been next to. Blearily, he forced his green eyes to open, pushing his hands underneath him as he pushed himself up to a sitting position.

His hair felt tangled and mussed up, and he imagined that it looked a lot worse than what he could feel. His eyelids fluttered, feeling heavier as they tried to close in on themselves. Reaching up slowly, the boy rubbed his face roughly, cursing himself mentally as he tried to shake off the clinging remains of sleep. He blinked rapidly, forcing himself to perk up as he scanned the area around him. For a minute, he was confused as to where he was, and he fell back into moment of confused panic.

But then he remembered. They were still back in the hollowed-out pine tree. The edges of the tree's shelter were ringed with mud, leftover dirt that hadn't been sheltered enough from the rain last night. But the rest of it held up a lot better than Hiccup had first anticipated. The ground was only a little damp, as if only a few raindrops managed to get through the needle screening. Not for the first time, he thanked his lucky stars that he was such an awkward kid before Toothless came along. Otherwise he would have never found this place on his own.

Twisting around with a slight wince, Hiccup reached backwards, placing his hand gently against his side. The movement caused him to gasp sharply, a wave of pain burning through him as he placed his hand on the wound. For a minute, his head spun dizzily like a top, blackness threatening the edges of his vision as he blinked rapidly to try and clear the sensation. His noise of pain was enough to rouse Astrid, the blonde letting out an incoherent mumble as her blue eyes flickered open slowly.

Her forehead creased for a moment, but eventually she forced herself into a sitting position. She shot Hiccup a deadly glare as she rubbed her eyes, grumbling a moment as she did so. "What?" She asked fuzzily, sounding grouchy as usual. Hiccup started at the sound of her voice, hand slapping back down to the ground as he swiveled around to look back at the blonde. But as he let his arm fall back, intelligence befell over the girl's eyes, catching sight of something that Hiccup hadn't. "You're bleeding a little." She said, voice a little scratchier than normal.

"Huh?" Hiccup looked down at his hand, realizing with a small jolt that it was smeared slightly with a hint of red. His eyes flickered back down, sighing mentally as he saw that it had seeped a little bit through his clothes during the night. It wasn't all that noticeable, but now that it was pointed out, Hiccup could feel the way his tunic stuck uncomfortably against his ribcage. "I guess I am." He said, shocked. Astrid's brow furrowed as she made a move to help him. To the left of the boy, Toothless started to wake up as well, ears perking at the sound of voices.

But right when Astrid was about to place her hand on him, Hiccup realized something with a sudden shot of panic. It was way too bright outside. Feeling a wave of fear overcome him, the boy shot up to his feet, shoving aside the burst of pain he got as he stumbled forward. Astrid got to her feet as well at the sudden action, mood doing an

entire turnaround as she tensed her muscles anxiously.

Ludi, who had been curled up beside her human snugly was jerked awake by the run, flopping limply to the side as she immediately started to complain. She raised her voice to a whiny yowl, flailing her paws around as she lashed her tail in irritation. Mistyeyes shot to her paws at once at the sudden yowling from the cat, blue eyes blazing with anger as she clumsily started to lash out at the unknown attacker. Nightflight's head snapped up, trying to get to her feet blindly. But she staggered at the last moment, falling forward and face-planting into the ground with a hard slap.

"Hiccup, what's wrong?" Astrid demanded, turning around and lashing out at Ludi bad temperedly. She clamped the cat's jaws closed together tightly, the silver tabby immediately started to try and thrash around in the blonde's grip. But Astrid only tightened it with a scowl, rolling her eyes before turning back to Hiccup. Mistyeyes seemed to realize what was going on, relaxing visibly as she drew back. Toothless threw a cautious look over at Hiccup before going forward to Nightflight, leaning down and helping her to her feet without a word. Nightflight's eyes flashed at the help, but all she did was let out a small 'Thank-you' in response to it.

Toothless nodded in reply, pulling away with an oddly-stony look. Mistyeyes blinked, ears flattening slightly at the sight of them two together. Instead, she turned away pointedly, twisting around and looking over questioningly at Hiccup. "Hiccup?" She questioned, tilting her head to the side. "What's wrong?" She could tell by the boy's hunched posture that something was wrong. The younger Viking burst out of the pine tree's screen, arm brushing the branches aside and letting the bright sunlight stream through the new opening. Mistyeyes immediately flinched away from the sharp glare, screwing up her eyes tightly as her wings pressed tightly to her sides. Her head rung from the burst of sunlight, and she could tell by the mutters from Toothless and Astrid that they thought the same. Even Nightflight sensed the change through her darkness, blinking with surprise as her eyesight turned slightly red.

Hiccup wasn't fazed, though. He was far too panicked to even think about the glare. Instead, he whirled around, green eyes round as he looked from one person to another. His eyes obviously stated that the others should know where he was going with this one. But as he got the blank looks back at him, he huffed out sharply, explaining: "We overslept." He clarified rapidly. Toothless immediately snarled angrily, crouching down into a defensive position unnecessarily. Astrid started, turning and looking at the sun with a new look of shock. Realization slowly dawned on her. It looked like it was almost noon. "We overslept big time." Hiccup stressed, letting out a small curse as he did so. He peered out of their shelter cautiously, biting his lower lip. "â€|such a stupid moveâ€|" He grumbled, scolding himself.

"What are we gonna do?" Astrid demanded swiftly, letting go of Ludi and watching for a moment as the cat flipped away from her roughly. The silver maine coon picked herself up dramatically, flicking her paws clean of pine needles as she shot a furious look over at Astrid. Her eyes flashed, and it seemed as though she was making a silently-deadly promise of what she would do if the blonde ever did anything like that again. Unnerved, Astrid turned around, eyeing Hiccup a little fearfully by now. "Do you think that they're out

there?" She demanded in a small voice.

"I'll bet anything that they are." Hiccup muttered in reply, eyes dark as he surveyed the land as best he could without showing himself too much. He shook his head back and forth, shoulders drooping. "They probably left as soon as the storm blew over." Hiccup guessed, Astrid's heart twisting a little as she crawled over to be beside Hiccup. She looked over his shoulder, careful not to touch it too much. By her guessing, it's been a while since it stopped raining. Though the sky was still clouded over, (which it usually was, anyway) the ground was much dryer than it had been last night. It was still damp, but as Astrid pressed her hand down against the grass, she realized that there wasn't much mud left from the gale last night. That meant that most of it had dried. Which, in turn, meant that time had passed.

Too much time.

"Well." Astrid huffed angrily, leaning back and sitting on the balls of her feet. Hiccup turned over to look at her, expression radiating self-loathing at the fact that he had not woken up sooner. Astrid would have liked to tell him that it wasn't his fault, or the fact that she didn't blame him for it either way. But the past few days, Hiccup seemed to only bristle more at the fact that she was trying to comfort him. So she did her best to swallow the words, choking them back and changing her mind instead. "We can't just go out there." She reasoned, Hiccup's face creasing with thought at the statement. "I mean- it's morning. Two kids with a cat and four Night Furies? We'll kinda stick out like a sore thumb."

Shadowclaw had taken to curling up beside Ludi off to the side, his ears flattened at the motion, looking over at the cat with a small frown. Ludi was trying her best to pay attention, but her eyes kept drifting off to the side, being distracted by a stray pine needle that was rolling across the dirt ground. Ears flicking back and forth with intensity, Ludi flattened herself down to the ground, narrowing her eyes as she started to stalk the fluttering leaf. Shadowclaw rolled his eyes, huffing out a short breath through his nose as he leaned over, clamping the cat's tail down against the ground, yanking her backwards in the process. She let out a sharp yelp, slipping clumsily to the side as she fell down against the ground.

Hiccup turned at the sound of the cat starting to spit again, blanching a little as he took in the sight of the Night Furies. They were all slowly edging towards one another, whether they had been aware of it or not. They sidled to the side, clustering together slowly as they reached out for some kind of comfort. The scene caused Hiccup to hesitate on the sloppy plan that was doing its best to establish inside his head. He turned over to Astrid, mouth ajar as he searched for something to say. But he didn't know what to say. What could he say? That he wanted to talk to his dragons in private to try and figure this whole thing out? He'd look like an idiot.

As he stared over awkwardly at Astrid, the girl seemed to understand a little of what he needed. He thanked the gods that Astrid knew more than he did at times as the blonde pushed herself up to her feet. "How about I go scope out this place?" She prompted, eyes flashing as she gave Hiccup a small grin. Hiccup did the same, reaching up and using his good arm to grab tightly to a tree branch, pulling himself up to his feet with a sharp hiss. Astrid looked a little worried at

the notion, but Hiccup brushed her off quickly. "Are you sure?" He asked, suddenly worried. "I wouldn't want you to get hurt"

"I'll be fine." She assured him swiftly, clasping her hands tightly behind her back. "Besides, I think you might need a few minutes to think. You look a little overwhelmed." Hiccup rolled his eyes sarcastically at this, but Astrid merely smile back at him. Her eyes darted to the dragons quickly for a moment before turning, starting back out of the shelter with a cautious look around. Glancing back at the boy, she added: "Besides, I'm too quick to be caught. I'll just have a little look around. I'll be quick as a bunny."

Hiccup tried to smile, but it came out more as a grimace. "I'll hold you to that." He warned her.

She only shrugged listlessly, eyes glimmering with amusement as she held his gaze. Then she turned with a skip, crouching a little lower to the ground and darting out of the hollowed-out pine tree quickly. Hiccup watched, heart in his throat. The girl got farther and farther away, little by little. Pretty soon, Hiccup could only see the top of her blonde head as she darted in between the covers of the tree. His hands wrung together nervously at the thought of her all alone out there. But he forced himself to shake it off quickly. She was fine. She was Astrid. If he even tried to sneak up on her, she would turn around and punch him all the way into next Tuesday. Which he knew from past events. So it wasn't like there was any guessing on his part; he still had the bump on his head to prove it. She could defend herself well enough. Or at least stall things long enough for Hiccup and the others to get to her before anything particularly bad could happen.

Or at least hopefully she'd be able to.

Hiccup watched as she vanished in the foliage of the forest, continuing to stare at the place she had disappeared before finally turning around. The other Night Furies were standing attentively, ears perked as they looked at Hiccup steadily. For a moment, nobody spoke, and Hiccup gave a small wince. Turning, he rubbed his bad arm a little gingerly, grimacing as he did so. It had stiffened up while he was sleeping, and while it hurt to move it in general, now it caused even worse pain. Mistyeyes spoke up, cutting off his thoughts as she flicked her ear a little dismissively. "You can tell her, you know." She said, not having to explain what she was thinking about.

But Hiccup only scoffed. "And tell her what?" He questioned.

But Mistyeyes only shrugged invitingly. "I mean- it's better than lying to her." Her voice turned slightly bitter at this sentence, and Hiccup blinked, a little miffed.

"I'm not lying." He retorted. "I'm just not going to get into something even I don't understand until I know how I'm gonna do it." Nightflight's shoulders hunched guiltily at this, but Hiccup did his best to ignore it. He would have flashed the dragon an encouraging smile. A don't-worry-about-it-it's-not-your-fault kind of smiles, but he realized that she wouldn't be able to see it anyway, so he didn't bother. He shook his head to clear it, beginning to talk with his hands like he always did when he got nervous. "We need to figure out what to do, guys." He said quickly, hands moving a mile a minute as

he flailed them back and forth. "We're running out of time, and we didn't really help our case when we overslept. The others could be anywhere on the island, and I'm pretty sure that we don't have a lot of time left." When the other dragons didn't offer up any kind of encouragement, Hiccup groaned loudly. "C'mon! You guys helped to clear the island of the Night Furies to begin with! Where are your good ideas now? Right when we need them, they don't come?"

"Maybe we could get off the island?" Toothless suggested, catching Hiccup off-guard as the boy turned over to the Night Fury with an odd look. His tail lashed as he spoke, but his voice sounded pretty sure of itself. "With the Vikings looking all over the island, we're not all that safe in the first place. Soâ€|why not leave it? It's not like we'll leave forever. Just until we can clear our minds and think clearly. With all this suspense about whether or not we'll make it, there's really no way that we can really make a logical plan."

"I can see that working." Mistyeyes offered in her input, a little reluctantly.

Toothless glanced over at her, green eyes flashing.

"What if we go back to the island from before?" Nightflight suggested, speaking for the first time as she shuffled her paws. All eyes turned to her, and the Night Fury seemed to grow warm underneath the stares as her ears flattened a little self-consciously. "You know, the one that we were on during the Raid." She said, meaning the words to be directed to Hiccup. "It was pretty close, but the other Vikings would probably take days to find it. With that time, we could already have a plan of what to do when it comes." Hiccup paused, mulling over the idea as he hesitated. "â€|I'm not sure I remember how to get there." He explained a little awkwardly, reaching up and rubbing the back of his neck. He was kinda too busy fearing for his life to be paying attention to where and what direction he had been going. "We could try to find it, butâ€|that could take _us _days. It would kinda defeat the purpose." Nightflight deflated at this, but seemed to see sense in the explanation as she quieted down.

"I suppose." She sighed softly, ducking her head a little as she looked away.

"I guess that's out of the equation." Mistyeyes sighed, almost a little loftily.

"No, wait. Hang on a second." Shadowclaw said suddenly, getting to his feet and pacing forward. Hiccup felt a small twinge of surprise as he looked at the Night Fury, a little shocked. He'd forgotten that Shadowclaw was even there in the first place. Usually the dragon had a habit of fading to the background of things. Though the thought was a little saddening, it was true. But now, he suddenly looked a lot more thoughtful as he looked down carefully to Hiccup's fake leg. His ears angled themselves this way and that as he thought, but then he brightened considerably. He straightened, suddenly looking much more self-assured than he had before. "We go back to Night Fury Island." He declared, eyes sparkling with excitement as he grinned toothily.

Mistyeyes had been observing the ocean outside the fronds of the pine tree, but she immediately stiffened at the suggestion. Toothless choked on his own air, and Nightflight started to shrink away, like a

turtle did when it retreated back to its shell. Even Ludi stopped in her tracking of the stray pine needle, picking herself up off the ground and looking oddly over at Shadowclaw. Hiccup tensed at the idea, but refused to turn it down too quickly. From the reactions of the other dragons, he could tell that they were immediately going to douse the idea. So he spoke up before they could.

"Would you care to explain?" He prompted, voice a little higher than normal.

Shadowclaw was painfully aware of the reactions around the room, squirming a little as he lost some of his self-confidence. "ummâ€¦" He swallowed back the lump in his throat, forcing his voice not to waver as he backtracked. "If you could describe the way that you got the other Vikings to understand that dragons weren't bad in one word, what would it be?"

Immediately, answers were fired out by those who knew the story.

"Terrifyingly-dangerous." Toothless snorted.

"Borderline ridiculous." Mistyeyes offered.

"A little overboard." Nightflight grumbled, tail twitching.

"â€¦Hard?" Hiccup asked, wincing as he tried to find the right word.

"Big." Shadowclaw answered for him, Hiccup giving a nod of agreement at the word. It would suffice, he guessed. The brown Night Fury paused a heartbeat, planning what he was going to say before he went on. "What you had to doâ€¦granted, it was hard. Most things are. But it was big, it was huge, and it was noticeable." He looked skeptically at Hiccup, and the boy nodded once again. Shadowclaw nodded in turn, sweeping on. "Well? Don't you see? In order for us to get anywhere with this, we have to do the same thing. We have to stand out, and we have to step _up_. Hiding here, we're not doing anything. We want Night Furies on Berk? Then we have to go to the root of the problem. And we have to fix it there. The fish rots from the head, right? If we take off the head of the fish, such as the hostility of the Night Furiesâ€¦then the disease stops."

"You make it sound like its easy, that way." Toothless growled. "But you've forgotten one thing, Shadowclaw. Every single person here has had some kind of bad falling out with the other Night Furies. I was exiled along with Mistyeyes, and Nightflight is a 'human-lover' now. Accompanied with two humans, if we walk in there, we're dead meat." The others nodded in silent agreement, looking saddened by the news as they looked at Shadowclaw almost mournfully. Shadowclaw drooped, looking a little disappointed. The cards were on the table, and yet nobody was even trying to pick them up and observe them.

"Isn't that the point, though?" He demanded. "I thought the moral of this whole thing was Second Chances."

Mistyeyes blinked at this.

But Toothless wasn't moved. "Shadowclaw, this is entirely different."

He snapped. "I won't risk any more lives. We can't just waltz in there and demand that they come to Berk. You're forgetting-

"That they helped us in the Raid?" Shadowclaw demanded, cutting him off rudely as he narrowed his eyes. Toothless stopped short at this, straightening considerably as he went silent. The younger dragon's eyes flashed, as if he knew that he had struck a nerve with that one. "They helped us before, which means that we made them see sense before. Maybe without Nightflight there controlling them anymore, they'll be different. Maybe they'll be able to see reason again. You never know." He hesitated before backtracking on himself. "At least, a majority of them might. If we just get a few of them to come back, we can show that Night Furies aren't all that bad."

"Or we show up with what looks to be an ambush party." Mistyeyes commented dryly. "There's always that factor."

Shadowclaw blanched a moment, looking down and staring at his paws. "Well, that's true." He said stupidly.

"No." Hiccup said suddenly, eyes starting to light up slowly as he pointed from Mistyeyes and Toothless to Shadowclaw. Ludi seemed to feel left-out of the pointing, leaping up from her recently-pinned pine needle and racing over towards them. She straightened, bouncing from foot to foot as she pushed herself into the conversation. "I think Shadowclaw might be going somewhere with this." Hiccup said stiffly, ignoring his cat for the time being. Grouchily, Ludi scowled over at him, blinking before turning around and heading back to her pine needle. How she remembered the one specific pine needle from all the ones that were littering the ground, Hiccup wasn't sure. But she pounced forward, landing squarely on the one she had been on less than a moment before.

"You do, do you?" Toothless asked. "Please, enlighten us."

Hiccup shot his dragon a look, but swept on easily. "If we persuade the Night Furies that helped us during the Raid to come back to Berk and see what it's like here, we might have enough evidence to make my dad see sense." Which had to be a lot of evidence, considering the fact that his dad was his dad. "If we can somehow show the other villagers before Dad, then maybe majority vote will rule in our favor. After all, Vikings can be persuaded if we really push the envelope."

"But you might be pushing it too far." Nightflight pointed out fairly. "There are a lot of Night Furies that might take you up on your offer, but there are probably a lot more that would refuse it. After all, I had a lot of followers." She said the word a little distastefully. "How can you be sure that they would be able to make such a fast turnaround?"

Hiccup shrugged. "I can't." He said simply. "And you're right: we don't know which will like the idea, and which would turn it down. We don't know how it might end. But I do know one thing. We're wasting time here. We're not doing anything productive; we're just hiding out in a tree and waiting for the other Vikings to find us." He eyed the height of the sun in the sky, feeling his stomach do a few flips with nervousness. Was Astrid okay? "Nightflight, if you go back and tell the other Night Furies how you made the change, they might do the same. After all, you have a big influence on them."

"You mean my eyes?" She asked sarcastically, flaring a little at the idea.

"No!" Hiccup said quickly. "Of course not! We're not going to the island and _forcing _the Night Furies to Berk. That would defeat the purpose. It's just thatâ€|they've listened to you before. And you too, Mistyeyes." The gray Night Fury started at her name, blue eyes lighting up with surprise.

"Hiccup, I haven't led the Night Furies in a long time." She explained, voice subdued. "â€|I can't do it again. They wouldn't listen to me. There's no use in even trying."

"That's not a trooper spirit." Hiccup muttered in her direction.

Mistyeyes gave him a grouchy look. "Maybe I don't wanna be a trooper." She said, only half-teasing.

"We're all troopers!" Shadowclaw objected, getting to his feet and bouncing. "We're all going to be in this together! There's no backing out now! If we back out now, then we can't even call ourselves Night Furies!" The smaller dragon puffed out his chest self-importantly, grinning a little childishly as he did so. "Night Furies are the bravest and toughest dragons in the world! We can't let ourselves be put to rest by a couple of Viking armed with threats!"

Toothless's eyes softened at the words, tail curling close to his side as he smiled. Mistyeyes started to perk up a little bit, blue eyes flashing as they flickered over to Shadowclaw. Nightflight sighed tiredly, but her ears were pricked as she listened to the youngling's words intently. "We have to show the Vikings that the Night Furies deserve another chance! That just because we've made a few mistakes in the past, it doesn't mean that we can't have our place on this island!"

"Shadowclaw has a point." Toothless finally pointed out. "We have to at least try."

Mistyeyes looked from Toothless, to Hiccup, as if weighing her choices. "â€|It'll be risky." She concluded after a hesitating moment. "â€|And dangerous. And stupid. And crazy. Which is why we're doing this, I guess. After all, this is the only kind of plans we can ever come up with." Shadowclaw tilted his head to the side, waiting expectantly for her answer. "I guess that we can give it a try." She muttered eventually. Shadowclaw's face broke into a grin, but she interrupted him before he could say anything. "But I feel like a million things could go wrong, there. I'm not going to let my guard down for a _moment._" Toothless shot her a look, but she only returned it steadily. She wasn't going to say that her words were merely out of panic. "It's a risky plan at best. But it's all we have. And I'm not going to let you all fly away to your deaths by yourselves. So I'll come along."

"Wait to be encouraging." Nightflight retorted.

"Always." Mistyeyes grumbled angrily in reply.

Shadowclaw turned over to Hiccup, looking excited at the prospect of

returning to the island.

Hiccup wondered why that was.

"When are we leaving?" The brown dragon demanded eagerly.

"We have to wait for Astrid to come back." Hiccup said, already knowing that the girl would be back soon. She'd been gone long enough; if she was gone for much longer, Hiccup would have to go out there after her. "And then we have to make sure that we know for sure what we're doing." He wondered whether he would bring Astrid with him. He doubted that he had much of a choice at the moment, but the thought of bringing Astrid along made him nervous. After all, he wasn't even sure it was the right choice at all to go out there in the first place. "There's a lot of things we need to do before we go, but we don't have a lot of time. So we're going to have to be fast. Does anyone-"

"Hiccup!" Astrid's voice suddenly hissed his name, and the boy turned quickly, heart ramming painfully against his chest. Was she hurt? Were the other Vikings around? Did she get spotted? Was the world ending? All three sounded like possible candidates, and he began to panic as Astrid dove inside of the tree for shelter, puffing for air like she had run all the way back to the tree in a sprint. "They're all on the other side of the island, I think." She gasped, holding a stitch in her side as she grimaced. "But by the time I finally got closer to the tree, they were all heading over here. So you'd better have a plan or something, because I'm not sure-" She broke off, eyeing Hiccup oddly suddenly. "What?" She asked.

"What?" Hiccup asked, titling his head to the side.

"That look on your face." Astrid said, narrowing her eyes slowly. "Something happened."

"Yeah. I got an idea." Hiccup said a little sassily.

"That's dangerous." Astrid sighed.

"We're going back to the island that the other Night Furies live on." Hiccup explained. "And we're going to convince them to come back with us." He did his best to ignore Astrid's shocked expression, giving her no time to object to what he was saying. "A portion of the Night Furies helped us during the raid, right? Well, I figure that if we go there and show them how much Berk has changed Toothless, Mistyeyes, and Shadowclaw, we can convince them that it's not so bad. After all, they did have enough tolerance to not let us die."

Astrid slowly nodded, stunning Hiccup at the easy win. But then she asked the question he had been expecting: "And the other half?" She trailed off invitingly.

"The other half can see how much Nightflight has changed in these few short days." Hiccup pressed. "That's the beauty of it! She's always had a big influence on most of them! And if somebody like her can grow to love Berk, then the same will go for them."

"Seems a little optimistic." Astrid commented.

"Granted." Hiccup offered. "But it's the best we have so far."

"And when does the whole 'Berk-doesn't-know-about-this-and-when-you-come-back-they-might-kill-you-on-sight' concept come up in conversation between the dragons?" Astrid prompted, voice layered and layered with thick sarcasm. "I mean- you're going there and offering a safe haven to the Night Furies? It seems kinda like they already have that where they are now. Why would they give up a perfectly-hidden island to go to another one? Especially when the island they're going to might not be very hospitable."

"You make a lot of really good points." Hiccup said lamely in reply.

"Well." She said dismissively. "It's a good plan, Hiccup. Just not very thought-out."

"So what do we do?" Hiccup asked.

Astrid hesitated, turning swiftly and narrowing her eyes as she studied the sky. The sun was in its high point by now. Pretty soon, it would start going down, and then night would be on them quicker than they would expect. "We should wait." She decided finally, turning back around and looking at Hiccup carefully, waiting for an agreement. "If we wait until night, we'll blend into the sky better. Even if it is cloudy up there, we'd still be visible."

"So we're still going?" Hiccup asked, raising an eyebrow.

"It's our best bet." Astrid sighed. "I can't believe we're going to do this all for a dragon that nearly killed us, but..." She trailed off, looking over to Nightflight questioningly. But then her eyes softened, and she gave a small smile. "I'll come along for the ride." She said firmly. "As long as you promise it'll all be worth it in the end."

"Well, I can't promise it." Hiccup said. "But I'll try to make it work."

Toothless let out a chirp of agreement, getting to his feet and bouncing forward. He nuzzled Hiccup affectionately in the cheek. The message went unspoken, but it translated to both Hiccup and Astrid perfectly clear. 'I'll make sure that everything will be alright. Don't worry.' Mistyeyes managed a small smile where she sat, subdued as she suddenly turned thoughtful. Hiccup could pick out a few words, and he realized that the dragoness was already thinking of what she would have to do when she got to the island. He watched as she turned to the side, reaching out with a claw and drawing out meaningless-looking scribbles into the sand.

He guess it meant something to her.

Shadowclaw gave Hiccup a self-assured smile, a nod of affirmation following the grin. He then got up to his feet, pacing back the way he had come before sitting down once more. He curled his tail neatly over his feet, tilting his head to the side and watching with mild interest as Ludi continued to pounce at falling needles. They were all retiring to their own activities, preparing themselves to wait out the sun.

Hiccup turned, looking sadly over at Nightflight. Excusing himself with a mumble from both Toothless and Astrid, the Viking turned backwards and went back over to the blind dragon. "You okay?" He asked softly. The dragoness looked worn and tired, not at all excited by the newfound plan as the others were. Which would make sense, of course.

"After all thisâ€¦I didn't think I'd have to go back." Nightflight murmured softly. "I've already had to face what I've done here. Now I have to go back there and do it all over again."

Hiccup bit his lip, glancing back over to Astrid with a panicked look. But the girl was busy gathering up the stray pine needles here and there. And by the amused look the girl kept shooting over in Ludi's direction, Hiccup could only begin to fathom what she was going to do with them when she got them all together in her arms. But he pushed the thought away, turning back to Nightflight and talking back to her in a low whisper. "It'll be okay." He assured her sweetly. "You'll have us with you. Nothing or nobody will hurt you while we're there. The first step to making up for a mistake is to admit that you've done something wrong, and that's always the hardest hurdle. But you'll be able to do it, I know you will."

Nightflight sighed. "Why do you have so much faith in me?" She asked.

"Because I know you more than you think I do." Hiccup said affectionately.

She snorted, but her eyes softened a considerable amount. "â€¦You won't leave me behind?"

"Of course not." Hiccup assured her. "It's just like Shadowclaw said before, we're all in this together." He grinned before adding: "I mean- I know I'm not all that much of a 'Night Fury.'" Nightflight chuckled at this, and Hiccup let out a laugh as well. "But I still think that I can stick with you guys for a while longer."

Nightflight's shoulders shook with a little giggle, Hiccup watching as a little of the tension left her shoulders. "Yes, I suppose." She teased, managing a joke. But then she sobered, blinking slowly as she looked straight at Hiccup. "Thank you." She managed thickly, the dragon suddenly sounding hard of talking. Hiccup smiled gently at this. "Thank you forâ€¦everything, really. I don't deserve it. For everything you've doneâ€¦and for everything you're going to do. I want to thank you for it."

"You don't have to." Hiccup said. "A family helps one another out. It's kinda a package deal."

"I think I like being a part of a familyâ€¦" Nightflight mumbled, talking to herself.

Hiccup turned suddenly, blinking as he looked around him. Shadowclaw was curled up tightly to himself, watching Ludi jump and twirl through the air playfully, letting out a laugh every so often at her movements. Toothless and Mistyeyes were off to the side now, talking about the storm last night and how Mistyeyes had slept right through it. The gray dragon rolled her eyes, smacking Toothless playfully as

he commented on her being hard of hearing. Astrid had gathered up an armful of pine needles, going over to Ludi and dumping the bundle square on top of the cat. Immediately, Ludi yelped, having the sense to stay quiet this time, at least. She started to roll around like a mad cat, spitting under her breath as she barrel-rolled across the ground. Astrid doubled over with laughter, blue eyes glimmering with amusement as Ludi smacked against the trunk of the tree on accident.

"Me too." He said, looking back at her.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: Sorry if this chapter is a little offâ€|

At lot of stuff is happeningâ€|soâ€|.

EOCs start tomorrowâ€|and a lot of drama is circulating around meâ€|.

Soâ€|

I could really use some nice reviews to cheer me up, guys. I'm really kinda bummed out. I tried not to let it show through my story though. Sorry if I didn't really manage itâ€|

And my computer did the weird spacing thing, so sorry if that looks bad too~

43. Chapter 43

Night clawed its way over the sky like it was crippled. Hiccup watched carefully from the edge of the tree, green eyes calculating as he kept track of the sun's progress through the sky. The others were doing their best to pass the time around him, but he could feel their gazes switch over to him anxiously every so often, waiting for him to tell them when they would get to leave. The question went unvoiced, of course, but it burned on everyone's tongue as they shuffled anxiously. They were nervous hiding out like they were, and they were on-edge to take their departure. But they all remained silent, simply waiting for Hiccup to call the shots.

But it was almost time to take leave, Hiccup realized. The chilly air of night was slowly nipping at the boy's nose, a slight shiver traveling up his spine at the thought of the colder air that was surely following it. Twilight had settled over the horizon like a blanket, and a few of the first stars were appearing in the sky overhead. Hiccup's attention was side-tracked as he turned over to Mistyeyes, the gray dragon's eyes fixed intently on the first few appearing twinkles. Her ears flicked back and forth irritably, eyes boring into the stars with a fixated expression. Astrid giggled softly where she sat next to Hiccup, leaning over and bumping her side against his playfully. "I think she's making a wish." She teased lightly, eyes glimmering at the joke.

Hiccup gave a laugh, rolling his eyes as he turned back to look at her. "I think we'll all need one with what we plan on doing." He commented, dousing the playful feeling around them and creating a little wall of tension once more. Astrid sighed softly, tilting her

head to the side and looking at him closely. Hiccup shuffled underneath her look, trying to maintain eye contact as best he could. He didn't like it when Astrid looked at him like that; sometimes the girl knew more about himself than he did sometimes just by looking at him in that strange way. Call him crazy, but Hiccup didn't like that fact.

"Yeah, but I'm sure it'll be alright." Astrid assured him, swiveling around slightly and leaning down, peering outside through the thick of the branches. She looked out across the wide ocean that stretched out in front of them. The dimming sunlight cast light red and pinks and purples to cascade over the water, and Hiccup had to admit that it took a little of the edge off the situation. Not a lot of things about Berk were considered very 'charming,' much less 'beautiful.' But sometimes, when the sun caught the water out there just right, it looked pretty okay. Slouching forward a little, Astrid turned around and rested her head limply against her knees. Her azure eyes flickered over to Hiccup, and she gave another small laugh. "Hey." She said suddenly.

"Hmm?" Hiccup hummed, leaning over and plucking up a stray pine needle from the ground. He rolled it with a small hint of boredom between his thumb and forefinger, watching it twirl as he kept an ear out for any footsteps outside or the beating wings of dragons. It wasn't necessarily boring to be keeping an eye out for things for so long, it was quiet the opposite, actually. It was very nerve-wracking. But after being cooped up for what seemed like a million hours inside a tree that also housed almost four full-grown dragons, along with a handful of other people, it could start to get to you. Hiccup's back was stiff and aching, his legs tensed and ready to run as pent-up energy coursed through him. But he forced himself to remain sitting, squirming slightly as he let out a mumble of irritation.

Astrid seemed to share his thoughts, eager to erase them as she continued to talk. "Remember that one Snoggletog?" She asked, humor alive in her voice as she watched his reaction. When he had none, she pressed: "I think we wereâ€|seven or eight? The one where your father tried to get you to go hunting with him during the party we threw?"

Hiccup immediately started to laugh, shaking his head back and forth already. His body language did a whole turnaround, the boy's shoulders and posture loosening at once as he relaxed visibly. Astrid watched the changes with a small hint of relief; Hiccup was too worried over everything. Granted, he should be. This could go all wrong and backfire horribly on them. But it pained her to see him so miserable. "Of course I do." He said, snapping her out of her thoughts. "He made a big show of getting everything together during the party, and then saying goodbye to everyone on the way out."

"What'd he say?" Astrid prompted. "'When we come back, we'll have a whole feast?' Didn't he say something like that?"

"Food to last weeks." Hiccup corrected her. "Everyone was so excited."

"And then you two came back about an hour later." Astrid giggled. "You were crying about a splinter that got caught in your finger."

Stoick looked _so _embarrassed." Hiccup flushed bright red at the memory, but his shoulders still shook with held-in laughter as the blonde went on. "And then you tried to make up for it by going out again by yourself. That didn't really help matters much when the entire party had to stop to go out and look for you."

"Yeahâ€|" Hiccup's smile faded somewhat, shoulders drooping lower as he studied the ground. "That was a long time ago." He stated softly, looking a little disconnected by now as he looked down. Astrid bit her lower lip, reaching out to try and comfort him. But Hiccup forced himself upright after a moment's pause, becoming cheerful once again as he gave another crooked smile. "Things are a lot different now, huh?" He asked, the grin not reaching his eyes as he studied her expression.

The girl shrugged. "I dunno. You're still pretty scatterbrained." She commented, earning a more genuine smile from Hiccup at the statement. "I mean- we've got a pretty big splinter in our sides right now. And we're running away. So I'm not really sure that you've changed all that much. You're just sharing your boat, now that you've got us along for the ride." She leaned against Hiccup again as she said this, the boy being bumped to the left as he staggered. "But, you know, this situation is more complicated." She stressed suddenly. "So I'm glad that we have a very detailed plan to go off of when dealing with such a tense ordeal." The words were meant to be a joke just the same as the others, but Hiccup only looked at her awkwardly, a little put-out at the tease. Astrid straightened dramatically, raising an eyebrow at him skeptically. "Please tell me you have a very detailed plan that we can go off of when dealing with such a tense ordeal." She pleaded flatly.

The others seemed to catch onto their conversation at this moment. Mistyeyes tore her eyes away from the sky as she turned and fixed her eyes onto the boy's thin frame just as intently as she had the star. Toothless looked up from entertaining Shadowclaw and Ludi, all three pairs of eyes went to train themselves on him. Nightflight had been curled off to the side, secluded as ever. She perked a little at their words, but it looked like she had been paying close attention in the first place, her ears firmly set backwards as she strained to listen in on their conversation. All eyes went back to him, and Hiccup found his expression just becoming more and more awkward.

"I meanâ€|" He blanched for a moment, drawing an uncomfortable pause as he stared back at them oddly. Astrid opened her mouth to offer some help, but Hiccup steeled himself, pushing himself up to his feet and putting his hands on his hips. "It's just like we said before." He repeated, voice much more confident than it had been a moment earlier in time. Toothless's ears pricked upwards as he recognized the change, offering the boy a sloppy smile. "We're going to go to Night Fury Island. Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes can lead the way back there." Mistyeyes looked a little stricken at this fact, as if she wasn't sure at all if she knew the way back her home. But Shadowclaw puffed up importantly, looking more than sure of his capabilities in getting back there. After all, he'd flown there and back only a few short weeks ago.

Hiccup started to talk with his hands, like he always did when he was nervous, or talking to a lot of people. He pointed over to Toothless for a moment, then over to Nightflight. "Toothless and I will make sure to flank Astrid and Nightflight carefully, in case they need

help in flying." He gestured lamely back to Astrid, who bristled at the notion that she wouldn't be able to fly the dragon properly. But he ignored her rudely, going on like she didn't shoot him a look full of daggers. "We'll try to make it there as soon as possible," He went on. "and then when we get there, we'll send the dragons in first. Me and Astrid will hide out somewhere; that way we can be safe if the dragons take it the wrong way. But if they want to hear you all out, then you can bring a few over to us, and then I'll tell them more about it."

"You'll tell them more about it?" Astrid repeated, blinking suspiciously over at her Viking. She raised an eyebrow, and Hiccup reached up, rubbing the back of his neck nervously as she eyed him. When he didn't reply, she pressed harder, the dragons around her getting the message as they started to back away. "What do you mean?" She questioned. "You make it sound like they'll be able to-"

"You've talked to Stormfly before, haven't you?" Hiccup demanded a little too hastily.

Astrid's limbs locked up together at the mention of her dragon, eyes becoming a little sharper at the words. Hiccup immediately regretted it, clamping his mouth shut tightly as his eyes rounded with guilt. Nightflight let out a small coo, the same kind of expression coming over her own face. But Astrid got over it as best she could, leaping around the obstacle as she shook her head roughly. "I mean you make it sound like you expect a response." She corrected herself, voice a little bit more bitter at this. But before Hiccup could try and find another excuse, she cut him off quickly.

"You're keeping something from me." She said, sounding just like she had back before she first found Toothless in the cove. Her voice took on that dangerous kind of dip to it, and Hiccup swallowed a little uncomfortably at the hint of anger thinly hidden underneath the surface. "You're keeping something from me, and I don't appreciate it too much. You've been avoiding weird situations and dodging bullets that I throw at you." Hiccup didn't reply. "Well?" She demanded. "Are you going to explain anything to me?"

"It's complicated." Hiccup mumbled defensively. Nightflight's ears slicked back to her head sadly.

"Well, I'm not doing anything else until you tell me." Astrid said simply, turning and sitting down firmly on the ground. Hiccup looked at her, exasperated. What an adult would do to a child if they were throwing a tantrum. But Astrid only replied by crossing her arms firmly over her chest, turning and sticking her nose up into the air pointedly. Fighting the urge to slap himself in the face, Hiccup glanced over at the dragons, as if asking for help. But they offered no companionship, merely looking back at him timidly. Groaning underneath his breath, he turned back to Astrid, leaning down and crouching beside her.

He wobbled a bit unsteadily on his legs, but he didn't fall over. Astrid glanced over at him, raising her eyebrows expectantly as she met his gaze. Sighing through his nose, Hiccup started out a little uncomfortably, gripping his knees tightly as he tried to find the words. "You know how I was acting weird right before I left the island?" He asked. "The time right before all the Night Furies started to attack the island?" The memory flashed behind Astrid's

eyes, and she gave a silent nod. "Well, I was acting weird for a reason. I'd met Nightflight before thatâ€¦in the woods. When she was still on theâ€¦wrong side." Pauses and stumbles littered his voice, and he winced inwardly.

"Yeah." Astrid said simply. "Why didn't you tell anybody that you met her?"

"Because something weird happened." Hiccup answered hastily. "She did that thing with her eyes, you know?" Astrid's eyes flickered over to the Night Fury, a little put-off by now at the way that the explanation was going. But she nodded nonetheless, giving a small shrug at the same time. Hiccup puffed out his cheeks for a moment, prickles of impatience crawling up his spine. The sun had sunken past the horizon almost all the way now; if they were going to leave soon, they had to get it all situated before they went. It might take a while. And Hiccup didn't know where or what his father was doing, he'd rather not learn the fact the hard way. "And it kinda went a little wrong."

"â€¦meaningâ€¦?"

"I canâ€¦" Hiccup blinked rapidly, grimacing painfully as he tried to find a way to explain. Mistyeyes was up to her feet by now, coming closer with a look that said she would have liked to help the boy. But she couldn't really do that, unless Astrid were to suddenly understand them as well. Which would be a preferred solution of course; it would be much easier if she were to understand the ordeal firsthand. Not to mention the fact that she would be able to pick up on things a lot easier if she were understand the reptiles. But Nightflight had expressed her situation before; she had made a mistake when causing Hiccup to understand dragons. She hadn't meant for it to happen, and wasn't sure how to replicate the actions she had done to accidentally lead up to it. They could try, but it might cause a lot more harm than good in the long run.

"Hiccup, you can tell me anything, I'll understand." Astrid offered, looking at him with more concern by now.

"I can kind ofâ€¦understand what the dragon are sayingâ€¦" Hiccup mumbled finally, a wince plastered on his face as he waited for her reaction. Astrid straightened significantly at this, blinking rapidly with surprise. Her hands opened and closed in her lap, and Hiccup guessed that she hadn't been expecting anything along the lines of what he had just said. She'd probably been expecting something like a mental hurdle he had now, or maybe some part of his body now weakened. Nothing like this. The surprise and shock was written on her face, and Hiccup had to fight to not groan aloud at the reaction. He scared her! This wasn't going any way like he planned.

But then suddenly the girl's expression changed, a ghost of a smile hinting on her lips. "You can understand them?" She questioned, suppressed laughter hidden in her voice. Hiccup stiffened at the new change, mouth snapping open at once to try and defend himself. The girl clapped her hand over her mouth at once as she realized that she had struck a nerve with that one, blue eyes alight with a certain kind of mischief as she studied him. Her shoulders shook a little up and down, and she spoke around her palm as best she could. "That's new." She giggled softly.

"Astrid." Hiccup said, rather patiently. "I'm being serious."

"You are? I hadn't noticed." Astrid said, voice a little muffled. "It's just that I wasn't expecting something so creative." She offered the last word, doubling over with laughter as Hiccup's eye twitched at it. "I'm sorry." She snorted, not sounding sorry at all her shoulders shook up and down. Toothless and Mistyeyes exchanged a small look, Shadowclaw joining in Astrid's lead as he laughed with amusement. Nightflight looked almost offended, though, looking as though she wanted to smack the girl upside the head and not give a care about her actions.

"Astrid." Hiccup said, voice adopting a much more whiny tone.

The blonde kept on laughing, unable to reply for the moment in time as she leaned forward.

Hiccup drew himself up angrily, pushing his tongue into his cheek with irritation. "I can show you." He warned, already starting to stand up. Astrid's laughter paused a heartbeat as she watched him stand, and though she didn't reply, her blue eyes said it all. 'I'd love to see you try.' Fisting his hands tightly at his sides, Hiccup turned back to the dragons, pointing at each one of them with a quick rush as they all straightened. "You all start talking! All at once." He ordered. Astrid's expression slowly melted little by little to be replaced with confusion. But she stood up nonetheless, a small smile still wormed on her face as she crossed her arms over her chest for the second time.

She leaned back, cocking an eyebrow and waiting.

Mistyeyes blinked, being the first to speak up. "He's telling the truth." She offered weakly.

But that seemed to be the perfect kind of sentence for Hiccup. The boy pointed at her dramatically, turning around and giving Astrid a look that said: 'I told you so, woman.' "'He's telling the truth.'" He translated fixedly, speaking up right after Mistyeyes and not even giving himself a moment to think it through before he relayed it back to the blonde. She stared back at him unflinchingly, still looking unimpressed at this. Toothless was the one to talk next, rolling his eyes with a slight flash of irritation in his green orbs.

"She's not going to believe you, we might as well just go. We're burning nightlight."

Hiccup shot the words back over to Astrid, and the girl turned, looking a little cross as she stared over pointedly to the dragon. But all he did was give her a little shrug in return, not looking very apologetic at all. Mistyeyes chirped where she stood, tail lashing back and forth: "Calm down, Toothless." She said, Hiccup already repeating her words as she spoke them. "We still have a long time left to go, the moon just came up a short while ago. We have to make sure that Astrid is ready before we do anything. She'll be the one guiding Nightflight, after all."

Astrid changed her arms so that they rested on her hips. The laughter was slowly dripping away from her face, changing into that of a serious kind of manner that only the blonde could have. She looked from Toothless, over to Mistyeyes, blinking slowly as she tried to

wrap her mind around what was going on carefully, trying to make herself see sense through it. But it seemed like her common sense was starting to win over her as the semi-impressed look wavered off of her face. Toothless sighed dejectedly at the look on her face, and Mistyeyes's ears flattened with a sad frown. Nightflight's ears flicked back and forth, sensing the silence as a sign that it wasn't working.

"Oh! OH!" Shadowclaw suddenly shouted, turning in a tight circle as his wings flapped excitedly at his sides. Ludi mewed happily at the sudden change in attitude, bouncing from one paw to another as she starting to jump up and down. "Talk while I'm talking! Say the words I'm saying right now~!" Hiccup repeated the words, fumbling slightly as he tried to talk and listen in at the same time. Astrid blinked, hands slipping down to her sides as she tilted her head slightly, looking a little confused as concentration filled Hiccup's face.

If he was pulling a joke, he was pretty good at faking it.

Hiccup raised a hand up to press against his temple, a new crease appearing on his forehead as Shadowclaw started to babble excitedly. He tried to keep up with the youngling's words as he spoke them, fumbling clumsily with his words as he always did when he was put on the spot. Speaking in just as big a rush as Shadowclaw did, Hiccup translated as fast as he could. "'I'm gonnaâ€¦do a jump.'" Hiccup said, watching with surprise as Shadowclaw launched himself into the air as soon as he stopped talking, maybe even a heartbeat before. Realizing what the littler dragon was up to, Hiccup regained a little of his confidence, talking faster now as he caught not.

"'And a little spin.'" He said, Shadowclaw immediately delving into a tight twirl, the dragon on his toes now. "'I'll draw a line in the dirt and then right after that, I'll go right up to you and poke you in the nose.'" The dragon did the promised tricks as he said them, swiping his claws across the ground and then shooting forward, poking Astrid's face right as he said the word 'nose.' Astrid blinked rapidly, flushing red with surprise and shock as Shadowclaw gave her a broad grin that spread from ear to ear. "'And to finish it all off, I'll do a little flip.'" Hiccup finished translating, rolling eyes as he spoke, smiling himself as he watched the kid perform the feat.

Landing neatly on the ground, Shadowclaw teetered on his legs, shooting Toothless and Mistyeyes a smug grin. "Wish you thoughta that one, huh?" He mused. Toothless chuffed with laughter, Mistyeyes giving a heave of relief at the newfound sight of Astrid. The girl's face was creased with thought and indecision as she took in the looks of all the dragons around them.

"â€¦That was impressive." She commented finally, breaking the silence finally. She turned over to Hiccup, eyeing him as she turned a little reserved. Hiccup gave her an awkward grin in return, hitting the his arms loosely against his sides as he rocked back and forth a little aimlessly. Astrid paused for a moment, then said: "So you're really not lying?" She asked. "You guysâ€¦_talk _to each other?" She asked, the words coming off her tongue it what sounded like an odd way.

"Yeah. It's complicated." Hiccup said quickly. "And I don't expect you to understand all the way just yet, becauseâ€¦well, I can't even

understand it all yet." Astrid deadpanned at this, as if asking: 'Then why'd you tell me in the first place?' But once again, Hiccup ignored her. "We can learn more about it later." He turned, looking out between the branches of the pine tree and looking outside. The moon was starting its ascent into the sky, which had grown pitch black by now as more and more stars started to make their appearance. "But right now I think we need to leave." He said swiftly.

Astrid jerked with surprised, obviously having not seen how late it had gotten to be outside.

"Let me go out first." Hiccup said, remembering how Astrid had taken the burden the last time. It was his turn now. Not giving the girl chance to object, he turned on his heel, edging over to the gap in the tree they used as a make-shift door and ducking outside. The small source of warmth and protection that the tree had offered him was taken away as he went out into the open, a blast of freezing cold wind being his greeter as he almost got buffeted right off his feet.

Bracing himself against the gusts, Hiccup narrowed his eyes with concentration, scanning the area around him with care. A tremor of anxiousness spread down his spine at the thought of running into some of the other Vikings out here in the forest. No doubt that they would stand a rather good chance, what with them having at least five Night Furies on their sides. Give or take four. With those odds on their side, there was little to no chance that they would actually no get off the island in the first place. Unless nets were shot at them with rapid fire action, there was almost a guarantee that they would make it off in time before they were too banged up.

But it the principal of the thing. They were trying to create peace in between Vikings and Night Furies. If they started this peace rally with a fight, they weren't getting off to such a good start, now would they? He looked across the still-damp foliage around them, trying to find some sort of movement or rustling around him to signal any kind of life. When he came up with nothing, he hesitantly raised up both hands, cupping them around his mouth. "Hello?" He called out, voice almost being swept away by the horrid weather. He waited for a moment before raising his voice little by little. "Hello!?" He shouted. Still nothing. Scanning the area once more, he turned back to the pine tree. "It's okay!" He called. "Come on out."

There was a pause, as if the others were checking for themselves before doing anything. But then Toothless slipped out from the cover of their shelter, slinking over to Hiccup and standing protectively beside his human. Ludi sat perched on the dragon's head neatly, her usual seat on the dragon, where she could tower over others and feel tall for once. The cat parted her jaws in a half-yawn, drinking in the scents of the area around her cautiously. Ears erect and searching for any noise. When she came up with nothing, she became bored at once, drooping visibly as she made herself more comfortable on the dragon's head. Toothless groaned a little at the movement, but didn't budge.

Mistyeyes appeared next, herding Shadowclaw along like a Sheppard would a sheep. She was trying to clear off all the loose pine needles that had stuck themselves against Shadowclaw's side, fussing over him motherly as she combed him through carefully. Shadowclaw ground and fussed underneath her grip, muttering something along the lines of

'suffocation' as he went back to join the others. And lastly, Astrid came through the tree herself, one hand resting on Nightflight's neck as she steered the dragon along like you would a horse. Hand tight enough on her to make her presence known, Astrid shifted it this way and that, herding the blind dragon along carefully.

"You know, I never thought of that." Hiccup said, nodding down to the way she was steering Nightflight. Astrid started at this, looking surprised at the praise. But then she smiled, glowing a small shade of pink at the thought of managing a dragon better than Hiccup. "You're really good with going that." He went on. "Steering her along, I mean." Nightflight's ears flicked at the words, but she didn't lash out like she normally did to others. Toothless cocked his head to the left, studying Nightflight like she was some sort of new specimen to be sorted out. Mistyeyes was either too absorbed in trying to clean up Shadowclaw, or she was just ignoring Toothless on purpose as she refused to look over at him. "If you practice enough, maybe you'll be able to do some pretty neat tricks." He offered.

Nightflight bristled, but Astrid spoke for her, surprisingly. "She's not a show pony." She scoffed playfully. Nightflight started at the words, looking shocked that the girl had said something so close to what she was thinking. But Astrid only gave another laugh, drawing back and taking her hand back to herself as she stepped back from the dragon. "Alright." She sighed happily, rubbing her hands together in preparation. "We're all here and ready for take-off." The girl seemed more than relieved to have a distraction from what Hiccup had just shown her, and the boy didn't blame her. He played along for her sake, knowing first-hand that sometimes it actually was better to avoid tasks at hand for a while in order to fix them correctly.

"Yeah, but that doesn't mean we can't be too careful." Hiccup sighed heavily, shoulders drooping at the thought of the long trek ahead of them. "Without any kind of supplies, it's going to be ten times as worse." His stomach was already yawning in on itself; the boy cursed his stupidity at not trying to get some kind of food during the day while everybody waited. But he'd been too tense at the thought of chancing whatever kind of danger was waiting for them if they went out there. Signs of fatigue and hunger showed in the faces around him, and he felt a small sense of guilt as he rubbed his arm nervously. Maybe if somebody had said something before, Hiccup might have put more thought into getting something to help them along.

"I'm sure there will be stuff we need where we're going." Astrid assured him, though her smile didn't reach her eyes.

"Well, yeah." Hiccup said simply, not putting up such an optimistic charade by now. "But how long will it take us to get there?" Shadowclaw deflated a little at this, as if he knew that it would be too long of a flight with the way they were holding up now. "And how do we know what way we'll be greeted when we get there. Whether or not we'll have to fight or something." He bit his lower lip, turning around and looking back the way they had come, towards Berk. He blinked rapidly, mind coming to a hasty decision quicker than he would have liked. But he voiced the thought anyway. "I'll go get us something." He offered. But almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Astrid was objecting shrilly.

"Hiccup, no." She said sharply. "What if you get caught? Then everything will fall apart. It's just a little hunger, Hiccup." She added, more gently. "We can deal with it. You don't need to keep putting yourself into hard situations to try and help. You've done it enough." She paused, then: "And if anybody should go and get something, it should be me. After all, you're in trouble with your dad. If he sees you, you're a goner. I'm not an official helper in this, yet. I might still have a chance if I get spotted. Plus, I'm probably faster than you."

"Astrid, just let me go." Hiccup pleaded. "I can be there and back within the hour. I'll be quick as a bunny."

"No." She said firmly, stamping her foot down on the ground with frustration.

"Astrid!" Hiccup tried weakly, voice taking on a more whiny tone at this.

"No." She replied, voice sharp.

"Astrid!" Hiccup yelled.

"No." She snapped.

"Can we go sometime this month?" Shadowclaw whined, breaking through their conversation as he jumped up and down on the ground. Hiccup and Astrid both whirled around to look back at him, breaking off in their fight as they blinked over at him with surprise. Mistyeyes had stopped in her grooming, blue eyes narrowed as she had watched the two bicker back and forth. Sometimes they looked like an old married couple when they were together. They could spend hours fighting over whether or not a potato was a vegetable, it looked like.

"We can stop on the way there." She said, getting to her feet as she glared from the boy over to the girl. Astrid looked confused, looking over at Hiccup a little awkwardly, as if waiting for him to translate, but not wanting him to do so at the same time. Starting at her look, he complied, wincing slightly as he did so. It was obvious that the situation was still a little weird between them, but Mistyeyes tried not to linger on the fact. If they were going to be tripped up by simple feelings of tension, then they might as well stop right now. "It's too dangerous for anybody to go back to Berk, and that might take a lot of the time away that we need to get off the island in the first place. A million things could go wrong during it, so why bother? We have to go carefully, so we have to leave now."

Astrid blinked, eyeing the dragon a little oddly as Hiccup finished talking. Mistyeyes only replied by giving a tense nod of affirmation, as if confirming what Hiccup had said for her. "I guess she has a point." Astrid mumbled finally, casting one last look back to the way that led back to the village. "Though I'd still much rather have something to eat in the next day or two." She said the point sarcastically, rolling her eyes as she spoke. But Hiccup hated to wonder whether or not her exaggeration might be a little too close to the truth.

Maybe they could manage to find a relatively-close island that wasn't

inhabited. That way they could stop there and try to have Toothless or Ludi try and hunt down something for them. But, looking over at Ludi, Hiccup had to wonder whether or not that was such a smart idea. The cat was dozing off lazily, eyes narrowed into tired slits as she let out a loud yawn. She looked like she'd make a good match for a really old, slow, mouse. Which didn't really fill any stomachs; it didn't do much of anything, really.

"She's right." He finally managed to say, turning around and going over to Toothless worriedly. Astrid did the same with Nightflight, hesitating a moment before grabbing onto the Night Fury and hoisting herself up onto the dragon's back. She landed a little wobbly, flinching as she waited for the dragon to retaliate back at her. The blonde might have expressed her interest and odd sort of affection for the dragon, but even she knew that Nightflight was stubborn and mean at times. Like this one. Strong and powerful as she was, Nightflight didn't like humans riding her. That much was for certain, at least. But the Night Fury only shifted underneath the new weight, adjusting herself as she sniffed the air, searching for the salty tang of the sea. She had to find out which direction to face before she got into the air.

Looking a little anxiously over in Nightflight's direction, Hiccup started to strap himself onto Toothless's saddle, latching himself on tightly to ensure that he wouldn't fall off on accident. Though he couldn't doubt Astrid's flying ability when it came to maneuvering Nightflight, he had to wonder whether or not she would be able to fly as fast away from Berk as Hiccup was wanting her to. She didn't have a lot of practice flying with her, and if they lagged behind, it could make all the difference.

Hiccup shook his head roughly to clear his thoughts. There was nothing he could do about it, after all. He had to fly Toothless, otherwise the dragon would be grounded. Astrid was Nightflight's only hope right now, and looking up at her expression, Hiccup realized that the blonde was fully aware of the fact. Her mouth was set in a firm line, blue eyes tense and serious as she placed her hands firmly at the base of the dragon's neck. She caught him staring, perking a little bit as she looked up to meet his eyes. He glanced down at Nightflight, then back to her, giving her a small smile in hopes of comforting her. Astrid returned the expression a little shakily, loosening her shoulders as she looked over at him a little nervously.

"This is our last chance to back out." She warned, Nightflight shuffling her paws anxiously underneath her. The girl took a moment to readjust herself before going on. Her blue eyes were weighted down now, as the full extent of the situation took its toll on her. They were going to an island full of Night Furies, who may or may not accept them for who they were and what they stood for. Not only that, but when they came back, the village might not accept them either. No matter which way they looked, there was an obstacle. "There's no changing our minds after we leave."

Hiccup seemed to understand her worries and fears, eyes softening somewhat at the blonde. Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw exchanged looks from where they stood on the edge of the island, the head of the group. They had been waiting for the others to give the signal they could leave, but now they looked alarmed. As if they didn't know what to do now. Whether or not the two would actually leave. Seeing the sight

made Hiccup realize how unsure everybody was in this situation. They were all as blind as Nightflight now, they didn't know what they were doing.

"No." Hiccup said firmly, drawing himself up and looking out over the ocean. "We're not backing out." Astrid seemed to relax at this, Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw breathing out puffs of relief. Toothless's ears flicked back and forth restlessly, though. His dragon was worried about him, and what they would find when they got back to the island. Steeling himself against his own fears, Hiccup tightened his hold on his Night Fury. His eyes narrowed with determination as he spoke firmly: "No matter what happens next, we'll be fine. We have each other, and that's all we need. We don't need Berk, and we don't need Nightflight's magic." The female jerked a little guiltily at this, but didn't respond outright. "All we need is knowing that we're all together on this. And nothing will change that."

Mistyeyes and Toothless shared a silent look, and the gray Night Fury managed a tentative smile at him. Toothless cooed worriedly at this, turning away with a small shrug as he looked over the waters. Hiccup sighed listlessly, "We don't know how this'll work out. Or what will happen because of it. But we just need to know that it will be okay. Because it will, I promise." His frayed nerves stung at the oath, the boy wincing as the words slipped out of his mouth.

He hoped he was right.

A broken promise couldn't be put back together.

It seemed to renew Astrid's faith, though. The blonde gave a small nod of affirmation, turning and drawing herself up with a new kind of courage. "Let's go, then." She said, glancing at Hiccup as she spoke. The boy agreed silently, and the girl raised her voice a little, making sure that she wouldn't be heard from afar at the same time. "Alright, Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes." She called out in a sharp whisper. "You two take the lead! We'll follow!" The two brightened at the command, turning around and bunching their muscles up together tightly. Completely in sync, the two launched up from the grounds, wings shooting out at their sides and catching the wind as they swooped up into the night sky.

Hiccup and Astrid watched anxiously, silent as they avoided one another's gaze. Shadowclaw being brown, and Mistyeyes being a light gray color, they stuck out against the stars and the moon. They didn't blend in with the night as most Night Furies did, they were like monochromatic shades against a dark surface. It would make their escape tenser than Hiccup first expected, but he hoped that in them leaving from the back of the island, it would help in their staying hidden. But he shook himself out of his thoughts, cursing himself for not listening to his own advice he had just given. He turned around to face Astrid, blinking slowly. "You ready?" He asked, making it sound like they were just going for a walk.

Astrid gave him a wavering smile. "As ready as I'll ever be." She offered in response.

"Let's go, then." He said a little sadly, turning back around and crouching down closer to Toothless. The dragon got the message, flattening himself to the ground before following Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes into the stars. Immediately, the air around Hiccup seemed

to get a million degrees colder, the winter air wrapping its arms tightly around him and refusing to let go. Teeth already chattering, he turned back around with a fright, expecting to see Nightflight and Astrid right where he had left them. On the ground and unable to get into the air after them. They'd have to stop the whole operation, and wait for the girl to catch up to them fully.

What he didn't expect was Astrid to be right beside him. The girl latched her hands onto Nightflight's collar, eyes narrowed tensely as she look around, on high-alert. Her hands twitched every so often, Nightflight correcting her angle as she leaned over more to the right or the left, leveling herself out. Hiccup blinked, eyes wide as he looked at Astrid with something close to amazement. Which couldn't be too far from the truth; the girl seemed to be a natural. Like she was meant to fly Nightflight and be her eyes when she needed them.

Turning away, Hiccup tried to focus on Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes, who were flying side-by-side up ahead. _Hopefully that's it. _He thought tensely. _Did you want us to do this in the first place, Thor? _He questioned, eyes breaking away from the two forms up ahead as he looked at the stars that surrounded them. But the night was clouded, large puffs of gray shielding his view of the sight. He deflated at the thought, turning around and looking back at Berk. The island was getting smaller and smaller behind them as they made quick work in getting away from their home. Hiccup felt half of him behind left behind in the forest, feeling like he was being torn into two. Being forced to chose between Berk and his own morals. He's already done that once. How many times was he expected to sacrifice himself for things? He felt a hollow feeling ache inside his chest, and he knew that it wasn't from hunger this time. It was something much more painful.

_Did you mean for us to do this? _He questioned, eyes bleak and sad as he watched Berk fade away.

Or am I just making a huge mistake?

44. Chapter 44

The cave was silent, the tense kind of feeling that it had adopted stifling and smothered the beings inside. Talon sat tall in the entrance of the large gaping mouth of the shelter, eyes narrowed as he looked up into the sky carefully, tail twitching every so often as he shifted restlessly. Although the sky was starting to clear up finally, it did nothing to shed light over his weighted-down heart. Ears swiveling back and forth a little tiredly, he gave a small sigh, shuffling his paws closer to his chest as his shoulders hunched slightly. Suddenly, he wished for the silence to be broken, to be shattered apart. He would take anything over the silence that they had been enduring these past few days. It was suffocating, this silence. He wished that it would end.

As if on cue, a sudden voice spoke up behind him, the soft, tinkling tone immediately giving away its identity. "Are you alright?" It chirped, light footsteps padding up behind him to take a seat beside the dragon. Talon gave a chuff of affection at the sight of the light brown Night Fury, feeling a rush of warmth at the sight of her earnest green eyes. Out of all the Night Fury that were left here on

this island, she was the best, in his opinion. Not in looks or grace. But of heart. He could almost feel her aura radiating off of her sleek coat, giving out happiness and optimism. Nowadays, Furies tended to ignore dragons such as her.

"Hello, Leafdapple." He purred, turning back to observing the sky with a calculated look. The younger dragon shifted back and forth a little nervously, a small tremor going through her as a particularly sharp wind gusted over the valley. As another beat of silence passed, Talon stiffened, anxious to break it as he grew uncomfortable. Glancing over in her direction, he had to look down slightly. He wouldn't consider Leafdapple a 'youngling' anymore; her height was up past his shoulders, and her eyes had that sharpened look of an adult. But she was still prematurely little, like she always had been. "How are you?" He prompted, surprising her as she turned to look at him with a tilted head. "Are you settling back in well?" He asked, remembering how her mother had dragged her along to Nightflight's island instead of staying behind like he had.

The girl's eyes flashed at his words, but her voice came smooth and easy as she replied politely. "Yes, I am. It's not so easy, dealing with others. Especially those who didn't leave the island with me. I think they still look a little down on me when I try to talk to them." Her voice turned slightly bitter at this, reaching out and tracing a faint line in the sand as she mumbled out the words. Talon pricked his ears, having to make an effort to listen as her voice lost volume. She shrugged carelessly as she went on. "I dunno." She sighed. "I guess it's just something that I'll have to cope with for now."

"That's unreasonable." Talon replied after a moment, wings twitching as his tone sharpened. "If it weren't for you and that other dragon," Leafdapple tensed slightly at the last few words, eyes widening as if the Night Fury had slapped her across the face. But he didn't pay any heed, not noticing the odd change in behavior. "things would still be the way they were. We'd have half the number in our family that we have now. You brought us back together. They should be thanking you, not rejecting your attempts at trying to readjust!"

"It's Shadowclaw." Leafdapple hissed suddenly.

Talon blinked, confused. "What?" He asked, lost.

"I said: It's Shadowclaw." Leafdapple repeated, more firmly this time. "His name was Shadowclaw. You just said: 'that other dragon.' He deserves more recognition than that. Without him, I wouldn't have shown him the way back to this island, and therefore, we wouldn't be here right now." When Talon still looked a little miffed, Leafdapple sighed through her nose, coming out as a sharp huff. "â€|Sorry." She offered, forcing herself to stop bristling as she looked away. "It's just that I've been feeling a little uptight these past few days."

But Talon only gave a laugh. "I never would have guessed." He said, the girl looking back over to him anxiously. "You seem pretty happy going around through the caves. You looked happy enough to be home." When the dragon didn't answer, he pressed harder, a little more concerned. "You are happy, aren't you?" He hedged out, tossing a glance over his shoulder and into the empty cave behind them. His wings grew limp slightly as he did so, and he tried to hold back a

small hint of irritation that bubbled up behind his throat. "It seems like a lot of dragons don't want to be here."

"Can you blame them?" Leafdapple asked, looking at him skeptically. Talon switched his gaze back to her, the brown Night Fury studying the ocean stretching out below them. "They just lost the only dragon that really inspired them. Whether or not she did for the right reasons, it's still a huge loss for them to lose her. And they didn't even get to see why." Her nose wrinkled as she remembered the scene back a few days ago. "And with Fleetfoot barging in here with only his side of the story of Nightflight leavingâ€¦that couldn't help much either."

"So you think it's not the full story?" Talon asked.

Leafdapple shrugged yet again. "Think of all the stories that were only pieced together a short while ago. Toothless's, Mistyeyes's, and even Shadowclaw's. Before, they all looked like traitors. Even to you. But it turned out that Toothless and Mistyeyes just found where they belonged. And Shadowclaw was only with Nightflight for that short time to try and find somebody to help him out like I did. There's always more than one side to a story. If we go around jumping to conclusions, we might as well just start running laps around the island and never stop. Both ways, we'll get nothing done."

Talon nodded slowly in agreement, eyes narrowing as he remembered back to when Fleetfoot had rushed back into the cave. The dragons that had agreed to come back and stay with the ones that stayed originally had only been here a few days. It had been quiet, like it always was, nowadays. The Pack was laying around the stone floor, sharing stories and words before everyone retired to sleep. The feeling in the shelter was actually one of peace and calm, for once, there was no angered looks or gestures floating around in the air. But it had all fallen apart when Fleetfoot had burst through the doorway.

His eyes had been wild and crazed, blood scabbed over on his scales, marring his features and making him look ghastly. He had been heaving for breath, pain and betrayal alive in his wide orbs as he took in the sight around him. At once, a smoky-gray Night Fury had leapt up to her feet, recognition thrilling through her at the sight of the second-in-command for Nightflight. "Fleetfoot!" She had gasped sharply, looking as though she wanted to dash forward to him. But she only took a step backwards, looking him up and down wearily. "What happened?" She asked.

He took in a few gulps of air, unable to reply as he tried to sort out his thoughts. "It'sâ€¦Nightflight!" He panted, Talon's forehead creasing as he too got up to his feet. Over to the side, he remembered seeing Leafdapple exchanging a startled look with the dragoness sitting next to her, he thought that it had been Shadowclaw's mother. But he hadn't been all that sure. At the moment, all that mattered was hearing Fleetfoot out. The dragon was going on, doing his best to talk through his gasps. "She attacked me, told meâ€¦told me that we should leave Berk alone if we know what's good for us."

Others gasped with surprise, though Talon noticed that it was all of those who had once followed Nightflight closely. The dragons that had stayed back from her ruthless nature didn't seem all that fazed, te

only reaction going through them was a small jolt of mild surprise. But others looked confused and shocked, mouths open wide as they looked at Fleetfoot with a sense of wild disbelief. At once, voices erupted like a volcano, questions being fired at the wounded Night Fury like bursts of flame.

"What!?"

"What is she doing!? That's the exact opposite of what she told us!"

"Is she going back on her own advice!? Where is she now!?"

"What do we do?"

"I don't know what to think anymore!"

Talon's ears had slicked back firmly to his head, feeling anger and frustration like claws inside of his stomach. The questions were far from intelligent, and the stupidity of the moment was almost enough to floor him right to the stone ground of the cave. But he forced himself to stay upright, listening to the voices of mystified Night Furies as they shouted back and forth frantically. Fleetfoot staggered underneath the weight of his injuries, and Talon had found himself wondering whether or not the dragon needed medical attention, rather than the news he had brought along with him. After all, that was the much more pressing matter at hand right now.

But Fleetfoot looked far from wanting out of the center of attention. He raised his voice, shouting over the yells and shouts of those around him. Gradually, the others became quiet, listening with a sense of desperate concern as all eyes turned onto him. Talon had sighed shortly, turning and sitting down fixedly as he looked over to Fleetfoot imploringly. Might as well see what this was all about, first. "I met here on a cliff." He said, getting his erratic breathing under control gradually. "She had a human with her, and I thought that she was under attack. But when I attacked the thing, she reacted almost immediately. She and Mistyeyes teamed up against me and managed to beat me." His voice grew slightly darker at this, as if reluctant to have to admit to his failure in taking them down. "And before I could go, Nightflight told me that if we wanted to deal with Berk, we'd have to go through her to do so. She wasâ€|entirely different. She couldn't see anymore. Something happened to her eyes. She relies on the very same human that we were sent out to kill now for her sight when flying." There was a collective gasp at this, and even Talon managed to perk with surprise. That was odd of her to do, he had to admit. "She'sâ€|" Fleetfoot gulped deeply, swallowing back at lump in his throat. "She's one of them now." He managed.

Leafdapple had started at the information, looking utterly lost as she once again looked over to the dragoness for help. But she looked just as confused. Everybody did. Talon's eyes had swept over the crowd around him, and he came up with all the same expressions. Looks of betrayal, anger, confusion, yearning, and maybe even a hint of jealousy in a few eyes. Jealousy for Nightflight being apart of Berk now, or for Fleetfoot for being able to see her again, Talon couldn't tell. All he knew, is that this was getting out of proportion too quickly. Fleetfoot had to stop before things got too out of wing. He started to step forward, but somebody else beat him to it.

A mottled Night Fury had rushed forward, startling Talon back to his original position as he stumbled backwards. It took him a moment to remember the dragoness's name as she darted to Fleetfoot's side, helping to prop him upright as best she could. But then he had remembered in a flash: her name was Juniper. She was one of the older dragons in the Pack, weathered by time and wisdom as she grunted underneath the weight of the younger dragon. But her eyes were narrowed with concentration as she started forward, helping Fleetfoot along as he winced and grimaced, acting as the dragon's crutch as best she could. "That's enough." She barked out, faltering in her strides a moment as Fleetfoot did the same. She drew herself up tightly, jaw locking backwards. "I don't see why this matters so much to you all, but right now this dragon needs attention, and you're giving him the wrong kind." Her words were sharpened towards the end, and Talon sat back down with a satisfied look on his face.

The dragons around him had murmured amongst themselves at the comment, looking a little angrily over in the direction of the older dragon. But they didn't reply to her chastisement, mumbles and voice dripping away slowly until the place was silent once again. Talon's eyes narrowed carefully as Fleetfoot had deflated visibly at this. He seemed angry at the lack of attention, now. The thought had sent Talon's scales brushing up the wrong way, but he didn't say anything. He clamped his mouth shut tightly as he watched Juniper give a stiff nod, turning and helping Fleetfoot along once more. The Night Fury seethed inwardly as dragons slowly went back to their original conversations, but he went along, nonetheless. He allowed himself to be herded away like a sheep, and Talon had watched him go carefully, eyes narrowed as he looked after him.

That had been a while ago. He had been wanting to get Fleetfoot on his own to ask him in more detail about what had happened, or see whether or not he was telling the entire truth of the matter. After all, the sudden arrival of his presence and the sudden news of Nightflight's new morals—both were very abrupt. It only added to the confusion, and it didn't help matters with the way that he was always surrounded by friend nowadays. Every time that Talon had tried to approach him, he found that others had already beat him to it. The dragon was always surrounded by followers, talking over his story and increasing the dramatics every time he did so.

Talon had debated either pulling Fleetfoot aside from his groups, or just joining in the listeners to try and figure out more of the background. But both options seemed not to cut it. It seemed like whenever Fleetfoot told his story to another group, it got more and more drastic in his story-telling. Talon had to wonder whether or not he was keeping up a constant story in his lectures over what had happened before he had gotten here. Which, of course, only added to Talon's new founded doubt in the dragon. And he had no right to drag Fleetfoot away from others that he knew better; it wasn't like Talon had any power over the Pack. Now that Nightflight had left, the Pack had remained without a leader.

Dragons went off and did what they wanted, when they wanted. It was organized, yet chaotic at the same time. It was a change from what it usually was. When others had gone to Mistyeyes to ask what they should do for hunting. She had been younger than most when she first started to take the role, and for a while, most dragons doubted her, and made pointed moves to show their distaste for the dragoness's

ridiculous attempts at leadership. But in time, she had proved herself a valuable dragon to have and look up to. The thought of her standing tall at the entrance of the cave was almost enough to shatter Talon's heart.

Back then, the Night Furies on the island had been together. Uniformed, and complete as they acted as one. And now, Talon couldn't tell where half of the dragons went, most of the time. It made him yearn for the old days, and wonder whatever had happened to tip the balance so steeply as this. Everything had gone wrong, and it had all started because Nightflight had brought that one dragon back here. The thought was a little venomous, but Talon realized that it held truth. It was the truth. If Toothless hadn't come back hereâ€¦

"It's not his fault, you know." Leafdapple said flatly, snapping the older dragon out of the past as he stiffened. He turned to look at her, trying to look innocent, as if she hadn't just guessed the exact words going through his head. But she didn't seem angered or put-out by the notion. She merely kept staring at the ocean, eyes vacant, as if she were looking right through the waves and right down to the very bottom of the sandy floor. "Toothless was brought here against his will. If you want to blame anybody for what happened, go ahead and blame Nightflight." She paused, titling her head to the side imploringly. "But then again, she might have changed too, from what Fleetfoot has told us."

"So who's fault is it?" Talon growled under his breath.

Leafdapple tore her gaze away from the water, eyes sparkling with a small hint of humor at his frustration. "I dunno." She giggled, voice suddenly lighter than normal. "I guess we'll never be able to tell, will we?" But then, her grin dropped, the girl deflating as she turned back to look at the stone between her feet. She went back to his earlier question, eyes downcast suddenly as her mood did a 180. "I don't show my frustration, or the way I feel left out becauseâ€¦it won't do any good, I guess." She glanced over at him, looking apologetic. "I don't knowâ€¦moping around? It doesn't seem like it would help things much. It seems like it would just make it worse. I don't remember a lot about the 'old days' or whatever that you like to talk about." Talon's ears flicked as she spoke, eyes suddenly growing concerned at her new crestfallen expression. "But I do remember how everybody used to be so tightly knit. They were the same. When my friends were sad, so was I. And when I was happy, usually everybody else got brighter when I stepped into the room. We were a family, so we fell or rose together. I guess I'm just wishing for that same feeling back."

Talon's eyes misted over, eyes becoming unfocused as his mind was dragged backwards in time. "Yeah." He sighed sadly. "Back then, things were a lot simpler." Leafdapple perked at the hinting of a story, turning her attention over on the wiser dragon as she pricked her ears. "We didn't have indecision and worry clouding each of our thoughts. And we didn't have drama being spread through the Pack like a disease." Amusement lit up the younger dragoness's face at this, and she gave a small giggle. A little of the weight lifted from Talon's shoulders, but he still looked a little depressed as he continued, more for his own sake than anything else. "Sometimes I find myself thinking more about the past than actually living in the present. I guess it's better than facing what's going on right now."

Leafdapple's ears flicked downwards, a saddened expression overcoming the dragon as she tucked her tail tighter to herself. Talon blinked, turning over and looking at her questioningly. But then his eyes cleared, depression lifting as he nodded over in her direction. "You know, you remind me a lot of Mistyeyes." He said, the brown Night Fury straightening visibly at the comment. Her green eyes flared with surprise, and her mouth hung open slightly, as if unable to speak. And Talon realized with a shock that she was honored by the comment. The thought only made his heart swell, and he felt his chest grow warm with pride. Maybe there was hope in things after all. "You two share the same personality, I think. You both think for others and the future before yourselves."

"â€|yeahâ€|" Leafdapple managed. "Thank you. Thank you so much." She still sounded a little shaky.

"Did you ever meet her? Or remember her?" He asked suddenly.

"Oh, yes. I did." Leafdapple assured him. "Shadowclaw and I found her and Toothless in the fight when we returned to Berk with you all in tow." Talon nodded at the memory. "She kept her eye on me, Shadowclaw, Toothless, and Shadowclaw's mother all while fending off enemies for herself. She wasâ€|really stunning. I can see why people would have looked up to her before. Although I don't remember itâ€|she must have held a really good influence over dragons."

"She was." He remarked carefully.

"She seemed really upset at what Nightflight had done to the Pack." She remarked. "She joined Berk to try and help you all, you know that, right?" He stiffened slightly at her words, and yet Leafdapple didn't answer. "She figured that if she were to go out and see all the fuss that Berk was making and saw what was so attractiveâ€|she might be able to sway you all into thinking the same way. But her plan failed because of Nightflight." She paused, tilting her head to the side thoughtfully. "I wonder what she'll do now that Nightflight might be on her side."

"I don't know." Talon mumbled, just as considering as he looked out over the horizon.

Leafdapple's nose wrinkled yet again as she turned to look at him a little closer. "Aren't you-?"

"Yeah." Talon sighed tiredly, suddenly looking much older.

Leafdapple nodded slowly, looking away a little guiltily. "I see." She said. "â€|I'm sorry."

"It's alright." Talon offered weakly in reply.

They sat in silence once more. Thick, suffocating silence. Leafdapple shifted a little uncomfortably, and Talon did his best not to look over in her direction. The awkwardness that had evaporated in their conversation was slowly making itself known once more, and Talon winced visibly as he looked away from the younger dragon. He had thought that he'd gotten over this feeling when the girl had first trotted out to greet him. But now, it looked like it wasn't dead yet.

He'd come out here to avoid situations like this; where was he supposed to go now?

Nowhere?

Was he stuck like this?

"Huh." Leafdapple's voice startled him into the present once again, the male turning to look at her oddly. The dragoness's eyes were fixed firmly on the horizon, eyes narrowing slowly as she took in the sight. Talon followed her gaze carefully, eyes widening slightly at the sight that met him. A few of the dragons that had gone out to hunt were now flying back in their direction, looking rushed and hurried, from what Talon could guess. Even from here, he knew something was wrong. And as if Leafdapple shared his thoughts, she got to her feet, stumbling over herself in the process as she looked on anxiously.

Talon followed her actions, though much more smoothly as he pushed himself. His tail lashed back and forth as he waited for the party to get closer, trying to guess what could have had them so worked up. An injury during hunting? A feud that needed to be settled? A sighting of Vikings or enemy dragons? Any of the situations, and much more, flashed through Talon's mind in then blink of an eye. He felt a small pressure in his chest as his heart told him to start panicking. But his mind told him to be calm, to wait and take the situation when it came. There was no use in getting so worked up if it turned out to be nothing in the end.

When the group finally landed on the rock next to them, they were gasping for air, eyes wide and frantic as they look at Talon almost desperately. The dragon steeled himself, forcing himself to be calm as he looked the group up and down critically. They didn't look injured, they looked perfectly fine. No angered looks between one another, or the hint that they had been ambushed by passing Viking armadas. Not a scale seemed out of place. But looking at them now, Talon couldn't help but think that they looked just like Fleetfoot had when he returned himself. And once again, he felt the scared sort of pressure in his chest. "What's happened?" He demanded tensely, looking from one Night Fury to the other.

It was the dragon in the lead of the group that offered him an answer. He shot up to his feet, looking alarmed as he locked eyes with the taller Night Fury. "We were hunting on the edge of the island." He puffed, Talon looking down and noticing the lack of food around them. But his ear just flicked at the empty space, figuring that they must have a reason for that as well. No, they'd better have a reason for that one. "And Frost said that he saw something out over the ocean." He puffed. "So we all went out together to investigate."

"And?" Talon prompted, looking at the group a little impatiently.

"We thinkâ€¦." The dragon trailed off, looking at the others as he suddenly became lost for words.

Frost took up the story, eyes hardening. "I think that Toothless and Mistyeyes are coming back."

Talon stiffened at once, pupils dilating at once. Leafdapple winced as she caught his new look, stepping forward and trying to distract the others by speaking up. It did the trick, the group turning over to look at her with wide eyes. "How do you know?" She demanded, voice guarded. But she couldn't help but feel a small twinge of hope. _Mistyeyes might be coming back!_She thought, with a small glance over at Talon. _Andâ€¦would Shadowclaw be there?_The thought sent a light fluttery feeling through her stomach, and she hoped that nobody else noticed the heat that rushed through her.

She shook her head mentally to clear it. That didn't matter.

"Almost positive." Frost explained, still wide-eyed. "One of the dragons had half their tailfin a bright red color. I might be mistaken, but didn't Toothless need something like that in order to fly?" Leafdapple quieted at this, ears flicking as she had to give Frost that one. He went on, realizing that he was getting somewhere. "And I couldn't mistake Mistyeyes, Talon. I'm nearly one hundred percent sure that it was her. And there were about two others I couldn't really define."

Talon blinked rapidly, getting over his bout of shock. "Anything else?" He asked tensely.

Frost's ears flicked back and forth anxiously. "They may or may not have humans along with them." He said tightly.

Talon narrowed his eyes at this, turning and looking over the water. Sure enough, in the distance, there seemed to be a small group of dots, just barely visible. It'd be a while before they got here, what with the speed they were showing. "Get into the cave, then." He offered, not trying to make it a direct order. "Tell anybody there to stay inside. Let them do what they came here for. And then if they come into the cave, that'll make it our problem."

"But -"

Frost's objection was cut short at Leafdapple's glare, the dragon shutting up at once as he clamped his teeth together. Instead, he gave a small nod, hesitating a moment as he looked back at the dots far away. But then he steeled himself, turning around and beckoning the others to follow him back into the cave. Leafdapple watched them go, eyes a little guarded as she took in their body language. It was obvious they were more than upset with the lack of excitement. Looking over attentively to Talon, she offered instantly: "I'll go help. I'm not sure whether or not they'll completely follow your instructions."

But Talon's clouded eyes were fixed on the point far away, eyes suddenly downcast.

Leafdapple followed his point of view, frowning a little. "It'll be okay." She assured him swiftly, doing her best to be upbeat, flashing him a sloppy grin. "I'm sure this will all turn out for the better. You never know with these dragons." It was meant as a joke, but Talon still looked a little too far away to hear her. Drooping, Leafdapple's ears flicked backwards once more. "I'll catch up to you later, then." She said weakly. "I've got to go after Frost and the others. Make sure that they're doing what they should."

Still, no reply.

Leafdapple turned, casting back a long look over her shoulder before whipping around and charging back into the cave, leaving Talon alone on the cliff face once more. The wind tore around him, buffeting him this way and that as he winced inwardly. The dots were getting bigger and bigger, and Talon was starting to doubt his thoughts of them taking a while to get there. Maybe that was just him being hopeful. The thought of Mistyeyes coming back hereâ€¦it was enough to knock him off his feet. Sure, she had her reasons of doing things. She was even right in her actions, that much had been proved time and time again. Maybe not to othersâ€¦but to him.

But did she know that?

Did she even care?

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: We'll find out his relations with Mistyeyes soon ;)

If I get more reviews for this chapter than last chapter, I'll update faster ((hint hint))

Anyway, I hope you like this chapter! Sorry if it's a little short! I'm feeling a little under the weather today, I have no idea why.

Anyway: You like Leafdapple? Think Talon is a little confusing? Like/hate where this is going? Don't like my annoying questions!?

ALL OF THESE ARE REASONS TO REVIEW! ;D

45. Chapter 45

A/N: Thanks for all the reviews! I finished my last EOC yesterday, so let's do this biz!

Forgot to tell you that my sister drew me a cover for this story! Even if it doesn't fit so well. ;)

On deviant art, her name is Buzzley, if you wanna check her out. The full picture is in her gallery, too~

Guyz, I just realized I could make a whole book on the backstory of Nightflight, Toothless, and Mistyeyes XDDD

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The giggle of the little dragon echoed throughout the cave, and the clicks of claws against the stone floor alerted the arrival of the youngling before she made her appearance. The Night Fury straightened at once, eyes softening as all worry and tense feelings melted from their face. Tail lashing with a burst of happiness, the male got to his feet, eyes shining as the younger dragon burst out through the tunnels. Her face was lit up with happiness at the sight of him, and she charged right for him, nearly tripping over herself in the process. "Whoa!" The male purred, having to stifle a laugh as the

little one skidded to an uneven halt, skidding a few feet before slamming into his leg. He took a small step backwards, leaning down and nosing the small one to her feet gently. "There you are." He said warmly. "I've been looking everywhere for you. Where've you been?"

The girl regained her balance quickly, hopping from one foot to another as she started to weave anxious circles around him. "I've been practicing flying!" She chirped. "I've gotten really good at it, too! Watch this!" She puffed out her cheeks, stubby wings flying out at her sides as she pushed off the ground. The older male stiffened as she took into the air little by little, heart picking up at once as he observed her rapid strokes. Her wings flapped back and forth a little roughly, the youngling trying much too hard in her flight. She took into the air, buzzing circles around the male as her face creased with concentration.

"Hey- you'd betterâ€¦" He trailed off, unsure of what to say as he turned tight circles, trying to keep his eye on her the best way he could. "Can you just-" He broke off, huffing with worry as the youth completely ignored him, trying to twist her body to perform some kind of trick in midair. "Be careful, pleaseâ€¦" He sighed, closing his eyes in a flinch as she tumbled out of the air, smacking into the cave floor with a pained grunt. Her wing bent forward awkwardly in the crash, draping over her head like a curtain, hiding her from view. The elder shook his head, leaning down and lifting his claw, hooking it underneath the girl's wing and lifting it ever so slightly. Large blue eyes stared back at him, embarrassment flooded through the orbs as she shifted her paws closed to her snout cutely.

"Whoops." She breathed out quickly, ears flattening close to her head. "I guess I forgot that trick."

He rolled his eyes, lifting the wing back over her head and sitting back on his haunches. His eyes glimmered with amusement, though, as the little one straightened, brightening once more almost immediately as she got over her slip. "But did you see me?" She demanded, crowing over herself like her mess-up had not happened. "I've gotten so much better over the course of a morning! And I really _could_ _do_ that trick! I swear! You- you had to angle yourself just so," She twisted her head to the side, craning her neck like an owl's. "and then you had to sort of bend your tail, like this." She said, cocking her tail into an L-shape. She remained in that awkward position for a moment before unwinding and giving a smug tilt of her chin. "I was the first to do it." She said firmly, surprising the male as he perked at the words. "The Teacher told me that it was the best twirl he'd seen in a long time!"

"Really?" He cooed, tail curling with pleasure. "Good for you!"

"Yup." The girl chirped, self-assured. But then she straightened considerably, looking around with wide eyes. "Did I interrupt something?" She asked suddenly. "Are you busy? What're you doing? Are you going to do something important? _Are_ _you_ doing something important? Can I help? Can I be important?" The Night Fury watched the youngling bounce up and down eagerly, watching as her little wings started to whir to life once more. Anxious not to let her get into the air again -and let her fall a second time- he shook his head

with a small laugh. The girl stopped hopping at the notion of boredom, ears flattening to head as she tilted it to the side, looking a little put-out.

"Come on, don't look so sad." He chastised, reaching out and poking the little one's nose with a single claw. The youngling spat at once, wriggling her snout as she went cross-eyed, leaning back to try and get a good look at her nose. "Where are your friends?" He asked, watching as the girl straightened at this, eyes widening slightly. It looked like he'd almost hit a nerve with the question. "I would have thought that you would go out and practice with them."

The little one blanched for a moment, eyes blinking open and closed rapidly as she searched for something to say. Finally, she managed to find her voice, getting over her obstacle as she quipped out a tart reply. "You don't want me to play with you?" She huffed angrily, blowing out her cheeks with irritation as she looked her elder up and down. "Am I boring?" She snapped, miffed as she turned and pointed her nose into the air.

The older dragon sighed, rolling his eyes and shaking his head. As if he were saying: 'We're gonna do this, again, aren't we?' Obviously the small one had done this before at the look that crossed over his face, and he heaved a small sigh. Willing himself patience, he leaned down, crouching low and pushing his forehead against the little girl's cheek affectionately. The nudge almost knocked her clear off her paws, but she planted her feet against the stone at once, righting herself before she could fall over. "C'mon." He said softly, amusement hidden in his voice as he drew back and looked down at the little dragon. "You know that you're the only girl for me." He teased lightly.

The dragon let out a giggle at this, recovering from her recent bout of anger as she beamed at her friend. She gave a laugh, tossing her head back and flapping her wings rapidly at the statement. "Yeah, I know!" She purred, bright as the sun as she swung her tail back and forth. The male's eyes softened down at her, and he opened his mouth to say something, when he snapped his mouth shut. Straightening, he looked around the little one to look past her. His eyes flooded with recognition as he raised his tail in greeting, and the little girl twisted around to follow his gaze. But as she turned around, she sobered instantly, jerking with.

Four dragons were heading their way, two adults and two little ones, much like her own size. As the two elders caught sight of the pair, they changed direction, trotting over neatly and calling out friendly greetings. The male drew himself up at their arrival, letting his tail flick over the little one's shoulders affectionately before he went forward and met them halfway. "Hello." He said, eyes taking in one dragon and then the other. "I haven't seen you two for a while, how's it going for you?" The two females lightened at the question, sitting down neatly and entering into the polite conversation that had been presented to them. The little dragon deflated at the negligence, throwing dirt over her disappointment as she let out a small sigh. She'd been looking forward to showing off her new move to him. And now that she messed it up, it wouldn't be as impressive when she finally managed to get it right.

She perked as she saw the two other dragons that were beside the older ones. Just her size, they had been in her flying class just

this morning. Though they never talked all that much, their names were imprinted in the little one's mind firmly, as if she had known them personally her whole life. Which she wished was true, in hindsight. The two were tussling on the ground with one another, squealing with joy and excitement as they faced off against one another. So far, the female was winning the fight; it was obvious that the male was letting her do so, though.

She tilted her head to the side questioningly, ears flicking back and forth with a yearning sort of interest as she observed the game that they were playing. She got to her feet, raising one, as if to walk over to the pair and ask to join along. Why couldn't she just do what her friend had done? Just get up and insert herself into a social setting? But the thought of going up to the two and trying to force herself into the equation was enough to send her reeling away from the situation. Shrinking back in on herself, the little dragon turned tail, slinking over and curling herself around the older male's leg.

He started at her touch, looking down surprised at the youngling. He leaned down, unnerved as he prodded the baby with his snout. "What's wrong?" He prompted, looking concerned. The other adults observed the smaller dragon a little oddly, as if they weren't used to such shy behavior. _Why would they be? _the little Night Fury wondered, a little dejectedly. But instead, she just turned, curling her tail tighter to herself as she buried her face into the male's scales.

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Mistyeyes studied the waves of the ocean, lost in thought as she looked down at the sea. Her face was blank, expressionless, as she looked down. Every so often, her tail would give a small lash of agitation, but that was the only thing that hinted at her upset attitude. To anybody else, she just looked quiet. Which was why everybody didn't raise any questions about it. Why they hadn't raised any questions the entire time that they had been traveling. No matter how many stops they had made, whether to hunt for food, or just to find someplace to spend the night, Mistyeyes had kept her thoughts to herself.

There was no use in moping around, it never got you anywhere. So the gray dragon pushed aside her worries, forcing herself to concentrate on the task at hand. When it was daylight, she worried about how fast she would go, and trying to remember the way back to Night Fury Island. And when it was night, she worried about finding shelter and lighting fire and finding food. And when she couldn't go to sleep, she would lift her head up and find herself talking to Toothless not a few moments later. She would try and avoid as much social interaction with Nightflight, and only making contact with the dragoness when they were flying. Just making sure that the female didn't get too far behind them in her flying.

But that was the most amazing part of it, Mistyeyes had to guess. The fact that Nightflight was getting so good at flying so fast. It was like her injury wasn't even relevant to her anymore. Now that Astrid was making sure that the Night Fury was leveled out enough and went smoothly enough, Nightflight could actually perform the feat pretty decently. She wasn't nearly as fast as Toothless or Mistyeyes, and the gray dragon had to wonder if she ever would be. But taken in her

very-recent injury, Mistyeyes had to admit that the dragon was actually trying. She was trying to fit in and make an effort to work alongside them. Which was something that Mistyeyes dreaded.

Because she still wasn't sure whether or not she could trust her completely.

She felt like an idiot when she thought such things. After all, everybody else had come to terms with the new side of the female. Even Toothless was making efforts to draw her in to conversations, or flash her a small smile every once and a while. Much as the details seemed small, they seemed to help the Night Fury. Mistyeyes watched as Nightflight brightened every time that Toothless acknowledged her, and while it made the gray Night Fury flare with jealousy, it did cause a small pang of pity to wrap around her heart at the same time. And not even pity for herself. It was pity for Nightflight.

Every time that she was even noticed, the female seemed to swell with happiness. Mistyeyes sat on the sidelines as they traveled for that last few days, keeping to herself most times and observing the female carefully. She watched as Nightflight smiled widely whenever she managed to light the fire by herself. Or the way that her tail curled up whenever Hiccup and Astrid told stories of what had happened before Toothless came to the island, or how things used to be. And the way that she grew as bright as the sun whenever Toothless even glanced her direction.

It was entirely different from her normal personality. It was almostâ€|sad at how happy she could get. And while that might not be the best word to use in a situation such as this, it would have to suffice for now. Because that was the thought whenever Mistyeyes looked at Nightflight. Sad. But then again, that made her a hypocrite. Because whenever Mistyeyes was alone, or left to her own devices for some time, she was thinking back on things in the past. How she had been loved in the Pack. Or the her rather-lonely childhood. Or the way that things had fallen apart so easily at the seams.

She thought the word 'sad' when she looked at herself right now.

So why was she so against Nightflight?

"Hey." The voice startled the dragoness back out of her thoughts, eyes snapping open to look back at the waves on the shore. She turned slowly, blinking and tilting her head to the side with curiosity. Toothless stood behind her, ears perked as he looked at her with a slight hint of concern. "Are you alright?" He asked her. "You've been pretty quiet ever since we've landed here." They'd landed almost half and hour ago. Hiccup and Astrid were trying to find a good place to hide out while the dragons went up to the cave, so they had all resorted to waiting until the teenagers returned. While the prospect of the two kids out there alone was frightening in itself, the fact that they'd been gone so long was starting to get underneath Toothless's scales, that much was for certain.

He was on-edge, his tail flicking back and forth every so often as his eyes bored into the dense foliage that surrounded them. After being on Berk for so long, which had been scarred over by the fires from the Raids, it was odd to see so much greenery in one place. But the familiar land was like a blueprint burned into Mistyeyes's mind.

Much as the dragon would hate to admit it: she was at home here. And she felt like if Hiccup and Astrid were in danger, she would immediately be able to tell. So she tried not to dwell on the thoughts of possible danger. And Toothless would do well to do the same.

"What?" Mistyeyes asked, mind clearing rapidly as she shoved the pointless thoughts and memories aside. From where they lay on the ground, Nightflight and Shadowclaw glanced their way, looking a little skeptical as they eyed the pair. It looked as though they'd been engaged in some kind of conversation, Ludi sitting neatly behind Shadowclaw as she tried to pin down the juvenile's tail. Shadowclaw jerked his tail lazily this way and that, trying to make an effort in participating in the most-one-sided game that the cat had started. "Of course I'm alright." Mistyeyes backtracked, answering his question. "Why wouldn't I be alright?"

Toothless shrugged, still looking a little worried as he gauged her posture. Realizing that she was somewhat hunched over, she forced herself to straighten, ears pricking upwards in an attentive position as she became more aware. Toothless's eyes flashed, a small hint of amusement going through his green orbs as she moved. Flushing with a rush of embarrassment, Mistyeyes let out a short huff to try and cover it up. "You know, if you're botheredâ€¦" Toothless began, green eyes locking with her's as he tried to comfort her. Mistyeyes's ears flicked back and forth slowly, the dragon's face falling somewhat as he spoke. "â€¦it's not like I wouldn't understand. I mean- you must feel pretty bad coming back here after they shunned you and everything."

Mistyeyes sighed heavily, turning and looking back at the waves. From where she sat curled up in a ball, Nightflight blinked a little guiltily, looking subdued as she watched the pair with a saddened gaze. Shadowclaw caught the look, changing his stare from Nightflight, to Mistyeyes, trying to connect the two of them as best he could. Sometimes, the two were so alike, it was hard to realize that they both hated one another. In the thick of things, it seemed like they would be able to stick together as they went through the tough situation. But the longer this whole thing went on, the farther and farther apart the two got from one another.

"It's fine." Mistyeyes said shortly. "I'll manage."

"Yeah, but you won't-"

"Alright!" Hiccup's voice suddenly rang over to the small group, causing them all to jump nearly ten feet into the air. Toothless swung around quickly, relief flooding through him at the sight of Hiccup and Astrid stumbling their way back along the path that they had left. They looked like they'd just rolled in a bunch of grass, stood up, and decided that they looked fashionable enough to go out to town. It was obvious that they had forgotten so much trees and grass existed either. Living for months on a gray/black piece of rock really changed a person. But nevertheless, the pair staggered down towards them, triumph shining in their eyes. "We found the perfect spot!" Hiccup crowed, quite proud of himself. At the tone of his voice, Astrid let an affectionate smile cross her features, rolling her eyes as she nudged the boy with her elbow. But it didn't dampen his feelings one bit as he skidded to an uneven halt in front of the dragons. "We found the perfect hiding spot." He repeated, a little

bit out of breath.

"Oh, really?" Mistyeyes purred, Toothless glancing at her quickly at the change in tone.

"Yeah." He puffed. "It's close to the main cave where you guys are going, but it's far enough away so that Astrid and I will be aware if they try and attack. This way, we can ride you there most of the way. So you won't have to walk for Toothless, and go slow for Nightflight." Nightflight flared at the last part, baring her teeth in a grimace as she growled over in the Viking's direction. Any time before this, Hiccup would have jumped out of his skin. But now, he just waved the dragon off dramatically, eyes flashing as he grinned in the female's direction. "And if the Pack agrees to what you're trying to say, we can get there quick enough so that they don't change their mind while you're gone coming back to get us."

Toothless had stiffened tightly long before Hiccup tensed, and Mistyeyes knew what was coming a few minutes before the concern was voiced. "You went all the way up to the cave?" Toothless demanded angrily, drawing himself up so that he leaned over Hiccup ever so slightly. For the boy's credit, he didn't flinch away from the angry tone, or shrink back underneath the barbed tone. He only gave a rather sassy roll of his eyes, crossing his arms over his chest and dramatically waiting for the dragon to be finished. "You could have gotten found, Hiccup!" Toothless snapped. "You could have been killed! Why were you so stupid as to get so close?"

"Do I look killed?" Hiccup asked, Astrid shifting a little uneasily as the boy picked up yet another conversation with the dragon. "I'm fine. Besides: it already happened, so I think that we should all move on from it. We're moving on from a bunch of different stuff already, so we might as well add this to the 'List of Things We Don't Talk About.'" Mistyeyes laughed under her breath at this, watching as Toothless puffed up, closely resembling that of a chicken when it was poked over and over. Hiccup reached over, poking the Night Fury in the nose and giving out a small 'boop'ing noise at the same time. Toothless blinked with surprise, drawing back and reaching up, wiping his nose with a sour look as he glared in the boy's direction. Mistyeyes's smile wavered at the actions, a sad sort of aura coming to rest around her by now as she shrunk backwards.

"Anyway." Hiccup went on pointedly. "The hiding spot is a little cave that's hidden by a few overhanging branches. It's not very big on the inside, but hopefully we're not going to be in there for very long. We think that it's hidden enough for us to be there for a while, but close enough for you to be able to get to us." Hiccup paused a moment, thinking back to his words before. "Or, of course, far enough to get away if such a situation were to occur."

"You make death sound rational." Astrid drawled.

"If only it were." Hiccup sighed, the puff of air causing his bangs to flutter upwards. "I'm just trying to make it seem a little organized here. If everything I thought out worked perfectly and fit the way that I said it would, we'd still be back at Berk. So I'm just trying to cover all possibilities. Can't blame a guy for trying, right?" Astrid opened her mouth to say something at this, but Hiccup cut her off rudely, not giving her the satisfaction. "Please don't

say anything." He said swiftly, turning around and going over to stand beside Toothless.

Off to the side, Nightflight, Shadowclaw, and Ludi all leapt to their feet, going over and standing with the others as they waited for further instructions. Hiccup turned and nodded in Astrid's direction, and the blonde immediately brightened. She perked happily as she went to stand beside Nightflight, reaching out and not even hesitating this time as she placed her hand comfortably against the dragoness's nose. She gave a small grin down towards the Night Fury. "You ready, girl?" She prompted, watching as a nervous tremor went through the dragon as a reply. "Don't worry." She said bracingly, turning and hoisting herself up to perch expertly on the scaly back. "We're gonna show those other Night Furies just what you're made of, aren't we?" She prompted, leaning over and patting the female's head with a determined grin. Nightflight let out a small purr at this, but Mistyeyes could still see the way that the female's knees were shaking back and forth. She was scared stiff, she realized. It would be a miracle if she managed to get two feet off the ground in her state.

"Alright, Bud." Hiccup sighed, doing the same as Astrid as he boarded his dragon with months of practice. Shadowclaw went over to stand beside Mistyeyes as he had done on the way here, an old habit that he couldn't very well shake. Ludi hopped up from the ground and into Hiccup's lap, the contended cat immediately flopping down to the boy's lap as she closed her eyes. If Mistyeyes didn't know the cat any better, she would have guessed that she had fallen asleep right then and there. "We're gonna stop by the hiding spot we were telling you there so that you can remember where it is. And then you'll have to leave us there."

Toothless shifted nervously. "As much as I hate to do it." He grumbled softly.

A flash of guilt went through Hiccup's emerald gaze. "Yeah, I'm sorry." He managed. "But you know that you have to do the next part on your own. It's inevitable." Toothless snorted at this, as if the excuse wasn't nearly as good. Which was partly true, of course. To a dragon like Toothless, who had been forced to watch his favorite person in the world nearly ripped all the way away from him too many times over, this would be like torture. And dimly, Mistyeyes wondered if it ever got routine: to watch Hiccup put himself in danger. Or whether it hurt just as much as it did the first time around for the Night Fury.

But at the pain welling in the dragon's eyes, Mistyeyes could guess the latter of the two choices.

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"It's not very protected." Toothless fretted, shifting his weight from one foot to another as he looked at the pair of kids anxiously. Hiccup and Astrid were standing in front of their shallow cave that they had signaled out as a hiding spot, looking back at the dragon as Toothless downgraded their findings. "I mean- the branches aren't covering it nearly as good as I thought it did!" The Night Fury blustered, sounding like a stressed-out mother. "And it's way too close to the cave! If you get cornered in there, you're not going to be able to get out! There's no escape route! And what if-"

"Oh, would you be quiet?" Toothless snapped his mouth shut tightly, whirling around and looking at Nightflight with a dangerous look. Mistyeyes winced a little at the confrontation, shifting away from the raging Night Fury with a small hint of anxiousness. But, though blind, Nightflight managed to hold his gaze pretty well. She was only a few inches away from it. Pretty dead-on, for her. Her ear flicked dismissively, and her voice was surprisingly teasing as she went on. "I'm blind. I can't even see it, and I know that it's fine. You're just making a big fuss over nothing."

Toothless paled, wings drooping down low to the ground at the statement.

Hiccup cracked a smile, and Mistyeyes let out a laugh. "She's right, Toothless." She said, before she could stop herself. Nightflight straightened at the agreement, looking surprised as she looked over in the direction Mistyeyes's voice had come from. "You're making a bigger deal out of things than necessary. If anything happens, we'll be out of there and heading over here before you can say: 'Whoops.' You shouldn't be worried about anything. Hiccup drilled us every night for an hour the past three days." The comment went added a little dryly, but Hiccup didn't look too ashamed of the fact. "We can make this thing in our sleep. You shouldn't be too worked up."

Toothless gave a small heave, turning over and looking a little awkwardly over at the little cave. It was partially hidden by the branches from a close-by tree, Hiccup had been right about that part. But it wasn't as hidden as it could have been. And even from here, Toothless could see that it would be cramped inside. They wouldn't be able to stay in there for long, with the risk of claustrophobia. But before he could voice the concerns once again, Hiccup spoke up, sarcasm lacing his voice thickly. "You know, we can't manage to find awesome tree forts all the time." He sighed. "That's only for special occasions." Toothless rolled his eyes grouchy, refusing to reply as he looked away. Hiccup sighed heavily at this response, shaking his head with a smile. Going forward, the teen got on his toes, reaching up and wrapping his arms tightly around the Night Fury's neck. He squeezed tightly, face creasing with sudden emotion as he hugged his friend as tight as he could manage. "It'll be okay." He assured him, albeit thickly. "We're going to make this work." He pulled back, wringing his hands together a little nervously. He turned, gaze sweeping over Astrid, Ludi, and the other dragons that were all giving him their undivided attention. "We _all _will." He pressed, more firmly.

"Hiccup's right." Mistyeyes chirped in assent. "There's nothing to worry about."

"I hope your right." Nightflight sighed softly, ears flicking back to her head.

The gray dragon turned, looking at her with a small smile. The dragon was still shaking a little with her tremor of fear, and Mistyeyes couldn't blame her. They all had reasons to not want to go back to the Pack. Toothless had been exiled with Hiccup's blood coating his paws, insulted and banned from returning to the island. Mistyeyes had been cast aside and demoted from leader, shunned from her own people that had once looked up to her for advice and wisdom. But Nightflight was different. When it all came down to it, the female was

responsible for all the deaths in the Raids. She'd morphed the Night Furies into creatures of bloodlust and anger, filling them with rage just so she could get back at Hiccup and Toothless. Nightflight had no idea how she would be welcomed.

She could be welcomed back fully. As a hero or a returning god to look up to.

Or she could be immediately hated and raged at. They could get attacked on sight.

Either way, both situations weren't what she would be hoping for.

"I am." Mistyeyes said, voice soft as her smile became evident in the words. "I promise."

Nightflight perked a little, looking up at Mistyeyes as a surprised look overcame her features.

"Alright." Hiccup said worriedly, breaking through their moment as he looked up at the sky. It was getting a little dark, the sun starting to make its descent to the ground as the sky turned a light pink. He turned quickly, grabbing Astrid's hand and pulling her backwards, towards the cave. "We'll be waiting here. We'll stay here overnight if we have to." He said, eyeing the sky overhead once again. "Although it's not ideal, so you might wanna keep that in mind."

Toothless gave another impatient huff at this. Mistyeyes threw him a look, stepping forward and in between the two, as if fending off an argument that was guaranteed to come. "We'll be quick." She promised swiftly, making a mental note to make sure and keep the vow as best she could. "Don't worry, Hiccup." She assured him. "We've got this all under control." She hoped they had it all under control. Otherwise the long rants from Hiccup around the fire at night had all been for nothing. And Hiccup could lecture for a long time, so it better not have been all for nothing. Mistyeyes could name ten things right off the bat that would have been more useful during the time spent listening to him.

Astrid disappeared behind the foliage, throwing a careful look over her shoulder as she went. Hiccup went a little slower, pausing at the entrance of the little nook as he stared back at the dragons. Ludi had followed the two inside, seeming to be sitting this one out this time. She'd been inside the cave before, and by the look in her eyes, she wasn't too keen on going back inside any time soon. "Good luck, then." The teen said tensely, as if the full situation had just now slammed into him. Mistyeyes and Toothless gave him twin smiles in return, Shadowclaw chirping a swift goodbye to Ludi as Nightflight gave a nervous duck of the head.

Staring fixedly at the group in front of him, Hiccup had to tear himself away finally. Giving them one last wave of the hand, the boy stepped back into the shallow cave, dropping the branches and watching numbly as they swung forward, obscuring the world outside from view quicker than he could comprehend.

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Leafdapple sat beside Talon, green eyes worried as they were trained

fixedly onto the entrance of the cave. The older dragon had tried to snap at her, telling her to get back with the other younger dragons. But she had firmly remained sitting beside him, not letting herself be debunked with sitting over by Fleetfoot. Just being near him was enough to give her an irritated headache. But now, she had different things to worry about. Footsteps echoed at the mouth of the cave, many footsteps, all meshing together and creating an almost roar of noise. Pebbles and rocks could be heard falling down below, and as it got closer, the paused in between the noises only seemed to get longer.

"They're taking their time." She noticed with a harsh whisper. Talon didn't even glance at her.

The other dragons that had gathered around the entrance were becoming agitated, eyes wide and somewhat frantic as they scanned the area attentively. A stifling silence hung in the air, and every dragon waited with bated breath for the newcomers to arrive. It hadn't taken long at all for the rumors to start spreading throughout the Pack. _Mistyeyes and Toothless are back. Shadowclaw is back. The humans are back on our island. Nightflight is back. _All of which seemed to float back and forth among the large crowd, but the most shocking one had to be the Nightflight part. Some dragons were waiting with barely-contained excitement, nearly gasping for air as they sat eagerly forward. But others had hate and anger in their stare as they glared holes into the stones.

It would be hell when they stepped inside this cave, Leafdapple thought.

But the group was smarter than Leafdapple first thought. They did not come in all at once. They came one at a time.

Shadowclaw was first.

The lithe young Night Fury ducked inside the opening of the cave, green eyes narrowed and slightly nervous as he caught sight of the large crowd waiting for him. Of course, it was much smaller than it normally had been before the Raids. They'd lost more than half their dragons to the humans, or even to other Night Furies themselves. But still, the sheer number of eyes was enough to smack the young dragon in the face. Leafdapple straightened at once at the sight of him, eyes widening with surprise as her breath caught in her throat. Her reaction wasn't all that noticeable, thank the gods. But it was slightly alarming that the mere sight of Shadowclaw could send her reeling. It's just that she hadn't seen him for so long. She'd forgotten the brief friendship that they had shared.

"Shadowclaw!" A voice cried out, one of the Night Furies that had helped out Berk, Leafdapple noticed with a wave of relief. Recognition was alive in the dragon's eyes, but so was surprise and a certain wary quality. "What are you doing here?" He asked, eyeing the youngling carefully. "Is Berk in trouble again?" At the mention of the island, the Night Furies that had been prime Nightflight supporters rolled their eyes, muttering angrily amongst themselves. Leafdapple caught a few words like: 'useless' or 'figures.' But she tried not to focus too much on the fact, pushing it aside for now as she focused on the Night Fury.

"Not exactly." Shadowclaw said, fidgeting slightly. "It's more like

it's in danger from itself."

"What do you mean?" Another dragon that had stayed behind.

"We have a proposition for you."

"Again?" Talon asked dryly, ignoring Leafdapple's furious look that was sent his way. "Pardon my asking." Talon went on. "But why can't Berk just mind its own business from now on?"

Another Night Fury entered through the cave entrance. Toothless's fake tailfin caught the fading light of the sun outside, throwing it back in the faces of the Night Furies as they winced away from the light. Talking over the mumbles and gasps that traveled like ripples across the crowd, the male raised his voice to a sharp, commanding tone. "Because it interests both Berk, and the well-being of you all." He said firmly, voice ceasing as skeptic looks bored into the couple as they stood against the current. "It might sound a little of right now, but we're asking you to hear us all out."

Again, Talon contradicted him, only furthering Leafdapple's frustration. "'Us all?'" He questioned.

A few beats of silence passed before Mistyeyes took her turn to enter the scene. Much different than the arrival of Toothless or Shadowclaw, the entire cave was plunged into deep silence as soon as she stepped inside. The Night Fury's eyes hardened visibly as the place went quiet, all eyes of the Night Furies trained on her. It was different gazes, just like the opinions varied throughout the group. Some were of scorn, some were mocking her. Some were surprised, and some even held a little bit of hope in their eyes as they realized who this dragon was.

But when Mistyeyes spoke, it was like she was oblivious to the stares. "Yes, 'us all.'" She said, looking blankly over at Talon, almost as if she were looking right through him. The male's eyes widened with hurt at this, the surprise melting away slowly to be replaced by sadness at the lack of attention from her. "We have something to say to you all. Something that you need to hear." Her ears flicked decisively before she went on. "It may not be ideal to listen to those who've been driven away." Mummers started up again at this statement, and Toothless flashed Mistyeyes a nervous look. But the gray dragon looked unbothered by the voices. "But we have important information for you all. Because we believe you've been misinformed." And as if by sheer chance, or maybe Mistyeyes knew more than she was letting on, her blue eyes found Fleetfoot amid the throng of dragons. Her gaze settled on the male, and she narrowed her eyes slightly as the words left her mouth. The two locked stares, and Leafdapple felt a small twinge of discomfort. Was there going to be a fight?

But before she could wonder any longer, a sudden shriek ripped through the moderate silence, a shriek full of surprise and anger. Leafdapple froze at once, eyes bulging out of their sockets as she realized what had provoked such a reaction. Nightflight had stepped into the tunnel, ears glued tightly to her head as she stood a little too close to the others. Like she was afraid of getting too far away from them. It looked like she had started in a confident walk inside. But the immediate reaction from the crowd around her shocked her out of her scales, eyes widening with shock as she flinched backwards.

She was like a turtle shrinking inside her shell when she got scared.

Leafdapple narrowed her eyes slightly, catching sight of Nightflight's own. They look clouded overâ€misty and unclear in the dim light of the cave. Shock thrilled through the girl as she leaned backwards. Did that mean Fleetfoot's story was true?

But her thoughts were broken by the dragons around her. They all had leapt to their feet, growling and glaring daggers at one another as shouts and screams bounced off the walls.

"Traitor!" One dragon screeched, couching down and making a leap for Nightflight.

But another intercepted, claws sinking deeply into the attacker as they tackled them painfully against the ground. "Don't touch her!" They snarled angrily. "She's our leader!"

"You're no leader of mine!" A dragon screamed from the sidelines, leaning over and spitting in the female's direction.

"You monster! You monster!" The chant was being taken up around them, along with a rival cheer of: "Hero! Hero!"

Nightflight looked as if her world had just come crashing down as she staggered. Toothless swooped down quickly, propping himself against her hesitantly as he tried to help her regain her balance. Shadowclaw looked a little overwhelmed, trying to shout over the noise in an attempt to calm those around him. But it was no use at all. Even Mistyeyes, who was trying her best to shout out loudly, couldn't catch the attention of those around her. They were too busy fighting one another, and as Leafdapple flattened herself close to the ground, she wondered whether or not this would stop soon.

"STOP!" Talon screeched suddenly, raising his voice so loud, Leafdapple was sure that the people back on Berk could hear it. The clearing immediately halted in its scuffles, Night Furies jolting to attention out of habit as they looked over at the old dragon with wide eyes. His eyes were narrowed as he took in the group of newcomers in front of him, looking a little confused and unsure. Finally, he took a few steps forward, the eyes of every dragon following him carefully as he crossed the stone floor. Inevitably, the older dragon's gaze went to rest on Mistyeyes, the girl stiffening as it did so.

Leafdapple sighed, giving a small wince.

"Mistyeyes." He said firmly, looking at her carefully. "What are you doing, bringing back these dragons?" The dragon opened her mouth to reply, but he swept on quickly, ignoring her. "The Pack has told you before the way that we feel. We may have helped you before with Berk, but that was in an entirely different situation. We have no affiliation with Berk any more, much less with the dragons on it." He eyed Nightflight and Toothless a little disdainfully as he spoke. A few supporters of Nightflight snarled at this, but had the sense to hold themselves back this time. "If you've come to stir trouble, then you can just leave." Talon managed. "We have no tolerance for trouble here. Not anymore."

"Trouble? You think I'm just here to entertain myself?" Mistyeyes managed, seeming to be speaking around a large lump in her throat. Her eyes narrowed angrily as she looked the dragon up and down. "I would think that you would know more about me than that." She growled, the Night Fury stiffening at the words. Toothless was looking from the male to the female, eyes lighting up considerably as he made the connection. "I thought you would have known that I always have a reason for what I do." Mistyeyes went on, fuming.

"Not when you bring these refugees into the cave." He snapped.

"We're not refugees." Mistyeyes snapped. "We're peacemakers."

"Is that so?" Talon growled, clearly not believing her.

"Of course it is!" Mistyeyes blustered. "I would think that you'd know my thoughts better than anyone!" Talon shifted uneasily at the words, starting to look a little uncomfortable as the Night Fury went on. "I would have thought you'd known me better than just somebody who causes issues for the fun of it." Her gaze hardened angrily. "I fix problems. Much as you would like to think different." She sighed, drawing backwards a little as she forced herself to relax. Shoulders loosening a little as she shot the male a furious look. "I would have thought you of all people would understand me better than that." She growled, fuming. "Some father you turn out to be."

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: ENDING. -head desk-

IM SO FLIPPING TIRED PEEPZ. ITS TWELIVE IN THE MORNING. IT'S A FRIDAY. IM DONE.

I CAN'T. I CAN'T. I HAVE LOST THE ABILITY TO CAN.

IM SO TIRED. IM SO TIRED I CAN'T EVEN EXPRESS MY LOVE FOR YOU ALLIN GETTING ME 700 REVIEWSS!111111!1!

GOODNIGHT. JEEZ.

46. Chapter 46

A/N: I got this new app on my phone. That's Virtual Villagers game? It SUCKS. I mean - it's an awesome app. I flipping LOVE it. But it's HARD. The Village keeps going when I'm sleeping! Or doing work! And everyone could die randomly because I'm not baby-sitting them. It's soooo frustrating. Somebody help me. -head desk-'

UPDATE: EVERYBODY IN MY VILLAGE DIED BECAUSE I WAS TYPING THIS.

ANOTHER UPDATE: Got hit in the hand with a tennis racquet by a friend. Hurts like hell to type :)

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The dragoness sat wearily towards the edge of the cave. Her blue eyes were round pools of misery and anguish as she looked down at the

ground, a miniature cloud of depression seeming to hang heavily over the female as she curled up close to herself. Around her, dragons milled about, preparing to leave as they chirped excitedly to one another. In a few different parts of the cave, fights were breaking out. Between family members who were splitting apart, or mates that were seeing different sides of the issue. The female watched these brawls with a desolate look, silently sitting off to the sidelines and fading into the background of things. It seemed like she was getting more and more gifted with this trick as the days went on.

A female's voice rang out across the cave, bouncing off the walls, and setting the dragoness's teeth on edge. Just the sound of this one's voice could send her reeling, just a simple statement could send her into a rage of fury. "Hurry up!" The voice barked out, the owner of it striding forward confidently. A strong aura of arrogance and triumph in her green eyes as she looked out across the crowd of dragons. "We're going to take off in a matter of minutes! If you'd like to stay on my good side, you'd best not keep me waiting!" Her words were flung out almost carelessly, as if the others being with her wasn't her main concern. That she could leave them all and go by herself if she needed to. This caused the dragons to hurry in their preparations.

"Please!" A voice wailed off to the right. The dragon sitting alone started at the yell, straightening as she twisted around with a confused look. She caught sight of a speckled Night Fury standing anxiously over a youngling, the thing looking barely old enough to fly as it curled around its mother leg. It was oblivious to everything as it slept timidly underneath its mother. The mother was looking desperately forward, at a male who had been heading for the exit of the cave. Her form trembled with panic as she called out again, watching with a hopeful look as the male hesitated a moment. "Please don't leave me! I need you! We both do!" Her ears flattened, head tilting to the side as she gave a small whimper. "You wouldn't leave your sonâ€¦would you?"

The male turned slightly, eyes flickering down to the small heap underneath the female. His eyes narrowed slightly as the little scrap gave a tired yawn, wings fluttering at its sides as it flopped around for a more comfortable position. The female brightened a little at the sight of it, and she straightened, as if a weight was lifted from her shoulders. But then the other spoke up, crushing the brief flash of hope underfoot. "I have to go." He said bracingly. "I'm going out to fight for a human-free world!"

Gasping sharply with hurt, the female turned away quickly, ducking her head close to her chest as she closed her eyes. The male dashed forward, pressing his nose tightly against her's for a heartbeat before drawing back. "Can't you see that I'm doing this for you?" He pressed firmly. He leaned down, stretching out and prodding his son with a claw. The youngling merely let out a sharp squeal at the touch, tucking his nose under its foot with a small flash of irritation. The female watched the exchange with a cold look, though. She wasn't swayed.

The male straightened, peering close to her. "Can't you see that Nightflight is right?" He asked her persistently. At the name, the female scoffed, looking away with a roll of her eyes. The male swept on quickly, not letting her object any further. "The humans have been here much too long! They came and attacked us for no reason! We lost

a few dragons then! What if one of those dragons had been our son?" The female sighed at this, but still shook her head listlessly. "I'm going out there with Nightflight. And I'm going to wipe all the humans off of this planet. It'll be a dragon's world again! A better future for our son."

"This isn't the solution needed, though." The female snapped. "Besides," She added, voice heightening with a sort of desperation. "They have plenty of fighters going with them. Please just stay here. Stay with me. I need you." She looked down at her son in between her legs, eyes rounding out with sadness. "We both need you here with us, can't you see that?" When the male didn't relent in his pressings, she added more angrily: "If you really cared for me, you would stay here with me."

The male held her gaze for a few moments, refusing to say anything more as he stared back at her steadily. The female's eyes were narrowed challengingly, tail lashing back and forth with frustration. The gray dragon that was off watching the scene unfold jolted slightly with surprise. The fact that the male would even hesitate on staying with his mate was shocking in its own rite; mates never went anywhere without the other. When you had a mate, you had them for life, there was no changing that. Once it was made official, it was binding.

And yet, everybody was splitting apart. Looking around the cave, the dragoness saw that there were more than a dozen couples breaking off from one another, or siblings that were fighting one another on whether or not to leave. A majority of the dragons were going along with Nightflight, chasing along her harebrained idea that the humans were evil and deserved to die. Others were hanging back, separating themselves from the group and taking shelter in the caves by themselves. It was the first time ever in the Pack's history that they were splitting apart. And it was taking its toll on the Night Furies.

A sharp cry made the dragon whip back around to the couple that had been fighting. The male had long since turned around, stalking fixedly towards the exit of the cave and refusing to even glance back at his family. The female watched him go, a wreck. Her shoulders shook violently, claws digging into the stone floor beneath her as she cried out after him: "Fine!" She sobbed, leaning down and wrapping her paw protectively over her son. "Fine!" She repeated brokenly. "Don't bother coming back here! Because I won't let you!"

The male didn't reply to her threats, and he didn't even hesitate in his strides. He headed right for the exit, ramming into the dragon rudely and knocking her clear off her feet. She gasped with surprise, tripping up and slamming painfully into the ground with a loud smack. Scrambling to her feet, the girl shook herself out, eyes wide and indignant as she whirled around to look after the male. Catching her angered look, he rolled his eyes, swinging himself around and merely flicking his tail dismissively. "Watch where you're going." He growled angrily, rounding the edge of the cave and disappearing from sight altogether.

Still sour, the dragon picked herself up off the ground, eyes narrowed as she shook herself out. "It's a mess." A voice said behind her, causing the dragoness to jump nearly right out of her scales.

Spinning around in a tight circle, relief flooded through her as she caught sight of Talon. Heartbeat reverting back to its normal pace, she felt herself relax little by little. The Night Fury seemed to understand her fright, eyes soft as he looked at her carefully. "Are you alright?" He asked, looking over her battered and weary form. "You look a littleâ€¦worn out." The explanation was a lame one at best, but the dragoness had to find comfort in the way that he cared enough to ask in the first place. It was more than anybody else had been doing around here.

"Sure." She huffed angrily, sour as she sat down with a plop beside the older male. "Worn-out from being ignored, is more like." She grumbled bad-temperedly. Talon's ears flattened a little sadly at the mention, but he didn't interrupt her as she swept on in her rant. "I'm sitting here watching everything that we've worked for slowly crumble apart, and nobody is even trying to help me fix it. I don't even know these dragons anymore! It's likeâ€¦I'm in a completely different pack of Night Furies. These aren't the dragons I grew up with! These aren't the people I once called friends!" She hesitated a moment, glancing over at him wearily. "At least, not most of them." She corrected herself.

"You can't do anything about it." Talon consoled her. "You've tried everything, Mistyeyes. Even I can see that." The dragon looked at him sadly as he tried to comfort her, eyes bleak as her wings sagged uselessly at her sides. "Nobody can deny that you didn't put up a good fight! You tried your hardest to keep this from happening, I know you did. And your best is all that you can give. I couldn't be more prouder of you." The words, which before would have made the dragon's heart swell with pride, only made the guilt press down more prominently on her shoulders. If this was her best, then she would hate to see what her worst could possibly be.

She gave a heavy sigh, closing her eyes and ducking her head as she listened to the shouts and angered yells traveling across the cave. Their home had been changed from a peaceful paradise, to a war zone. The thought sent shudders up her spine, but she realized that it was plain and true. Whatever home she had here before was gone now. And even if the other dragons went away with Nightflight, there would still be that small doubt in her mind. She knew that this wasn't her best. She knew that somehow, some way, she could do so much more than just sit by and watch, or stay back in the caves like a coward and try to fool herself into thinking that nothing was happening.

She had to do something else. She couldn't just sit by here and watch things unfold. She wasn't helpless. She wasn't a youngling, wailing in the Nursery. If she stayed back and did nothing, she would always have to live in the shadow of that one thought: _What if. _What if she had gone with them, what if she had found a way to save things after all. The thoughts would pound on her mind while she was trying to focus on other things, it would race laps around her as she tried to sleep. She would never get any peace in life if she were to stay behind. No; she would be living in constant regret.

"Mistyeyes?" Talon asked suddenly, realizing that there was a difference in his daughter's mood. He leaned over, craning his neck almost comically as he tried to get a good look at the girl's expression. Her eyes were suddenly narrowed, as if something had just occurred to her, and the thought was upsetting her. He felt a twinge of discomfort at the thought, ears flattening back to his head with a

downcast look. He had tried to comfort his daughter more than once during this time, but pretty soon, he figured out that not much of his words would make things better. He took to sitting on the sidelines most times and watching as Mistyeyes was shunned from the other dragons. Little by little, the others had started looking to Nightflight for guidance or advice instead of her. And the abandonment had taken its toll on the female a considerable amount.

"What's wrong?" He asked, watching as the girl lifted her head slightly, looking out at the other dragons. There was a certain kind of pain in her eyes as she studied the figures, concentration creasing over her face at the same time. Talon glanced out over the crowd, heaving a heavy sigh. "I'm sorry, Mistyeyes. It's just the way it has to be." He said ruefully. "How about this?" He asked bracingly, trying to sound much more upbeat by now. Mistyeyes's ears perked at the change in tone, twisting around to look a little anxiously over at her father. "We can go out and hunt while everybody is leaving." He suggested. "That way, by the time we come back, they'll all be gone. And we'll have food for the rest of us who are staying behind."

Mistyeyes stiffened at the suggestion, pausing a moment before looking away. "Yeah." She mumbled incoherently. "Exceptâ€¦"

Talon tilted his head. "What?" He asked gently. "You can tell me anything, Mistyeyes, you know that."

The dragoness took in a rather sharp breath, tensing herself unsteadily. "I'mâ€¦I think I'm going to goâ€¦with them." She said slowly, eyes almost distant as she turned to look back at him. Talon froze at the words, eyes stretching wide with confusion and betrayal as he stared at her numbly. Mistyeyes felt her heart slice apart at the look, realizing what she must look like to him. Talon had made a specific effort to draw Mistyeyes away from the Pack late one night, the evening that Nightflight had first announced their new plan to rid the world of humans. He'd made sure she was alright, and he'd asked her if she would go with them or stay behind.

She had promised that she would stay with him, because it had seemed like the right thing to do.

But if she wanted to help matters at all, she had no choice.

She was going to have to break her vow.

A thousand explanations flashed through her mind, going by at a million miles an hour. Desperately trying to pin one down long enough to use it, the female opened her mouth, preparing herself to tell her father how she was going to try and save the others before they could do anything too stupid. But movement off to the side caught her eye, the dragon stiffening considerably as she caught sight of Nightflight. The female was watching the pair carefully, green eyes narrowed into slits as a small smirk played on the edges of her mouth. She was waiting for Mistyeyes to elaborate.

Feeling her stomach cave in on itself, Mistyeyes's tongue went dry for a moment, the dragon unable to find the ability of speech underneath Nightflight's stare. The female sneered at the lack of words, giving a slow nod, as if to say: 'I knew it.' She turned,

making a move as if to walk away from them, losing interest. Mistyeyes flared at once, gritting her teeth together tightly. Nightflight would never let her tag along with them if she saw how much Mistyeyes was fighting internally. She had no other choice.

Drawing herself up, Mistyeyes started to speak, forcing out the words painfully, like they were lined with thistles. "I think that Nightflight is right." She said, spitting out the words distastefully. But Talon seemed to think the new tone was directed at him, eyes widening with hurt as he took a small step backwards. Nightflight perked where she stood off the side, eyes flashing as she turned back to be their audience once more. Before now, Mistyeyes had watched the couple fight together with a sense of horror. And now she was no better than the male.

"We aren't going to fix things just by sitting here and hunting whenever we need to. We need to go out there in the thick of things and solve the problem at its source!" The words were entirely unlike her, she was like a whole different dragon right now. She willed her father inwardly to realize this fact; he should see it in her eyes that she didn't mean a word she was saying. But he was blinded by the shock of what was happening, only managing to stare at her blankly. "â€Times are changing." Mistyeyes pressed desperately, eyes flashing over to Nightflight. "And we have to change with them."

"Change isn't good." Talon said, taking a step towards his daughter. A look of anguish was over his face, and Mistyeyes fought not to wince away from it. "Please stay here, Mistyeyes. You don't know what you're talking about! You could get hurt out there, or even lost!" He paused a moment, searching her eyes rapidly, and watching as the female merely looked away. "You promised me that you would stay." He reminded her. "I don't want to lose you, Mistyeyes. Please don't make me go through it again. I can't lose another one."

Mistyeyes refused to look at him, pretending not to know what he meant. "You'll have the others that are staying." She said frostily.

"But it's not good enough." Talon pleaded. "Mistyeyes, stay with-

"Just stop it!" Mistyeyes exploded, eyes stinging and burning as she whirled on her father. _Please stop. _She begged inwardly, feeling Nightflight's stare burn holes through her scales. _It hurts too much. I'm doing this for you, can't you see? I'm sorry. _"This is my decision! I'm not a youngling anymore!" Talon winced away from the sudden volume of her voice, eyes raw with pain. She was literally tearing him apart. "You can't control me, and neither can the humans! I'm going with Nightflight because it's the right thing to do, and if you're too stupid to see that, then I'm wasting my time here with you!" She paused, swallowing back the lump in her throat.

She started to back away, feeling sick to her stomach at the sight of her father in such a wreck. But her eyes caught Nightflight's yet again. The dragon's glare was slowly returning. Inwardly, Mistyeyes had to give props to the dragoness, she wasn't about to be swayed so easily by just a few simple words. And yet, she wasn't satisfied at the same time. It wasn't enough for her. _So what would be? _Sighing through her nose, and narrowing her eyes angrily, Mistyeyes turned

back to the older dragon in front of her. She had one last thing she could try. And if that wasn't enough for Nightflight, then Mistyeyes had no idea what she would do.

"You let mom get killed by the humans during one of the Raids." Mistyeyes managed thickly, her chest burning with her hidden sadness. Talon's limbs locked together tightly at the words, looking as though he had just been slapped across the face. "You didn't even do anything to try and fix things." She spat. "You justâ€¦let her die." She had to pause for a moment before going on. "Well, I'm not going to do that. I'm going with Nightflight. I'm not going to end up like mom. Just another thing that you let go of without a fight."

Before her father could even try to say anything in response, Mistyeyes swung around fixedly, stomping away in a heated rush. Nightflight watched her go, irritation slowly melting away to a sort of interest. Her ears perked as she got to her feet. Walking after Mistyeyes, along with all the other dragons that were leaving, she tilted her chin smugly as she walked past Talon. The Night Fury was still looking after his daughter in utter shock, unable to do much of anything besides stare after her despairingly.

"Alright!" Nightflight snapped out carelessly, weaving in between the dragons assembling outside, marching her way right up to the front. She stood at the head of the group, looking as if she fit the part of leader perfectly. But Mistyeyes knew better. "We're going to start making our way towards Berk, and for all of you who're coming, you'd best know where your loyalties lie!" She turned, eyes narrowing slightly as they landed on the gray form of Mistyeyes. The dragon had seated herself in the back, away from most of the others as she waited silently. The pain and grief from what she just done was trying to be swallowed back, but it was showing a little in her clouded blue depths. "If you're having second thoughts, then leave now. We have no room for cowards on this trip."

Nobody spoke up, and nobody moved.

Nightflight nodded firmly. "Good." She said, turning around and shooting her wings out at her sides. "Alright!" She called back. "Let's get moving! I want to be at least part of the way there by nightfall!" Cheers of assent and excitement rose up from the gathered dragons, and Mistyeyes hunched her shoulders bracingly. She prayed to the heavens fervently that she had made the right choice. Because if she just made a huge mistake, there was no fixing it. Trying to choke back her fear, Mistyeyes turned back slowly, eyes strayed back to her home one last time.

Talon stood at the entrance of the cave, green eyes dead and numb as he stared at her pleadingly. One last beg for her to stay back. To make the right choice. Mistyeyes's breathing hitched as the two met eyes, but she stomped down the feeling as she could. She was making the right choice. Whether he knew it or not. Pausing a moment, she let herself drink in one last look at the person that helped her grown and learn her whole life. The person who had nudged her back up into that air when she threw a fit about not being able to fly. The person who had tucked her underneath his wing at night to keep the monsters away. Who had acted as her friend when she had none. And who filled the job of two parents when he was only one. And now she was leaving him.

Tearing her eyes away painfully, she forced herself to look straight forward, to look cool and confident. The opposite of what she really was. As the dragons leapt into the air, she took off after them, refusing to allow herself even one glance backwards. She didn't need to look back. She could feel her father's desolate look trained on her, burning right through her and stinging her heart with its gaze. Closing her eyes tightly, Mistyeyes willed herself the courage for whatever was going to happen. Because she was going to need it.

_I'm so sorry. _

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Mistyeyes had gone silent at Toothless's side, eyes clouded and sad as she stared at her father steadily. Talon had a look between hurt and happiness on his face, as if he wasn't sure if he should be glad that his daughter was back. There seemed to be a piece of the puzzle he was missing between the two, but Toothless decided that solving their issue would have to come later. Clearing his throat, he called the attention of the dragons around them, most of which were still looking fixedly at Nightflight. The black Night Fury seemed daunted by the reaction she had been given, trying to get a sense of her surroundings as best she could with no eyesight. The thought sent Toothless reeling. They would have to be careful here. If a fight broke out, Nightflight would be too confused to do anything. They would all be goners.

"Listen!" Toothless shouted, raising his voice in a sharp yell. It did its job, catching the attention of the dragons around them as they turned to look curiously in his direction. "We have a problem in Berk!" He yelled, earning a few rolls of the eyes, or grumbles of irritation. But instead of dressing them outright, he just swept on in his pre-thought-of words. "The humans are under the impression that all Night Furies are evil now! They're reverting back to their old ways, and they're trying to hunt down Nightflight!"

"Let them have her!" A dragon spat from the corner of the room.

"Take that back!" Another howled furiously.

"Will you stop it!" Shadowclaw yelped where he stood, having moved over to stand closer to Nightflight. A female off to the side of the group was watching Shadowclaw intently; it took a few moments for Toothless to recognize her Leafdapple. The Night Fury had fought alongside them in the attack, and she also had helped bring the other supporting Night Furies back to Berk with Shadowclaw. Could she help them in their persuasion? "Don't you get it? The humans might come here for revenge! They could be coming after you next!"

Toothless hissed angrily, whirling around to throw a dirty look back towards Shadowclaw. The youth looked confused at his glare, tilting his head to the side as if to say: 'Was it something I said?' They hadn't been planning to scare the others into obeying them! That defeated the whole point of what they were trying to do! And what if they decided to attack again to _keep themselves _from being attacked in the first place? Shadowclaw needed to leave the talking to them for once!

"I'd like to see them try." Fleetfoot growled from where he sulked,

eyes flashing with rage.

"We'd tear them to pieces before you could even say 'Whoops.'" Another added on flatly.

"Oh, really?" Toothless mused. "Would you care to explain the way they beat you back at Berk, then?" The objections faltered somewhat at the words, and Toothless couldn't help but feel a flash of satisfaction. "You may think that you're some kind of all-powerful beings, but you aren't. Night Furies may be special in their own ways, but they aren't flawless. You're just like any other kind of dragon. You have faults, and you have weaknesses. The humans are smarter than you. They're stubborn, too. They'll keep fighting to exploit that weakness until there's nothing left but to run away again. But where are you going to run to this time?"

Mistyeyes tore her gaze away from Toothless, giving him a skeptical look. The humans on Berk might be chasing after Nightflight, but they had no intention so far in getting revenge on the dragons. Surely that would come sooner or later, but not right now. This whole thing was an entire bluff, and if the dragons didn't buy it, there was nothing else they could do.

Talon spoke finally, Mistyeyes wincing at his voice. "So what're you saying?" He asked tightly.

"I'm saying that you fighting against the humans has to stop. It's in everybody's best interests." Toothless said firmly. "I mean- think about it! You all are huddled up in this cave all day doing nothing but trying to survive to the next one. This isn't life! This isn't living. You're missing the joy in life, or the happiness of it. You don't live life to survive, that defeats the purpose. You live life to cherish it. And if you all stay here, you won't get that happiness. You'll just be this sad group of dragons that everybody pities. If you make peace with the humans, you'll be able to have everything there that you don't right now. You'll have friends, family—so many things that you'd never be able to accomplish living like this!"

"A pet for the humans?" Talon asked, a little disgusted at the notion.

This time, surprisingly, Mistyeyes spoke up. Her blue eyes were full of anger at the words her father said, and as she drew herself up, Toothless realized that he never fully realized how much that Mistyeyes appreciated Berk. Or how much she had become a part of it. "Not a pet." She snapped angrily. "A companion." Looking away from her father, she raised her voice, addressing the whole of the crowd, going over and standing protectively in front of Nightflight. "I left this Pack, that much you all know, I'd guess."

A few uncomfortable looks traveled throughout the crowd, but most just looked irritated. Like the person that they had once looked up to, now just annoyed them all with her very presence. Others looked over at Nightflight, and Mistyeyes found herself wondering what exactly the dragoness had told them when Mistyeyes turned sides. Nothing good, probably. Ignoring. Mistyeyes thought blandly.

"Despite what you've heard, or what you think of me," The dragon shot

a look over at Talon at this. "I left for a dignified reason. And that reason was because I found something much better than this." She gestured around her with her tail at the last part. "I found a place where I was accepted, and appreciated for who and what I was. Sure, it was hard to fit in at first. I wasn't accepted completely right on the spot. But when I was, I found that it was the greatest way to live for a dragon. I had people that cared for me, but didn't baby me at the same time. Dragons aren't pets on Berk, we're friends. Humans don't take away our will, they merely help us along the way to find it. It was hard to do in the beginning, butâ€¦if I had the chance to re-do any of my actionsâ€¦I wouldn't change a single thing."

She was barely done before somebody shouted. "What's that got to do with us? We'll never be accepted! There's no use in trying!"

"We've been fine so far on our own!" Fleetfoot snapped angrily. "We don't have to change!"

"We're still recovering from what that _thing_ _did_ to us!"

Nightflight shrank back a little bit, tail twitching with nervousness. Mistyeyes glanced back at the blinded dragon, swallowing back a sharp flash of frustration. How would they ever even begin to make these dragons listen? "Would you just hear us out?" She snapped, voice heightening with her anger. "The others dragons that are on Berk now thought the same exact thing before they became apart of it! We're just asking if you'll consider it! You'll have a much better life on Berk! It's changed all of us!"

"I'm not going anywhere with _her_." A Night Fury growled, glaring at Nightflight.

"I'm not going anywhere with either of them!" A dragon snorted. "One's a washed-up old leader that has no idea what we're going through right now!" Mistyeyes flared at his, digging her claws into the ground as she growled deep in her throat. But the dragon went on rudely, not even hesitating in his words. "And the other is a blinded version of a dragon that used to mean something!" Nightflight jerked up at this, eyes narrowing slightly as she, too, gave a little growl of anger. Toothless caught the change in mood from her, looking thoughtful. "Of course both of them would go to the humans!" The dragon jeered. "They're both weak and useless now! And they want us to be the same!"

Toothless edged over to Nightflight. "Are you going to take that?" He challenged lowly.

Nightflight's eyes went into furious slits.

"I mean- just look at them!" The dragon crowed, realizing he had the support that he needed by now. "They're not even trying to stick up for themselves! One failed in a plan that she was to incompetent to lead, and the other is softer than moss on a hot day! How can we be expected to rely on those who couldn't even handle simple tasks? They both lead us in the wrong direction before, we aren't going to let them do it again, are we?" Cheers went up around the male, but suddenly, they died off. Silence reigned throughout the cave.

Nightflight had stepped forward. "Take it back." She snarled, blind gaze remarkably sharp as she glared daggers straight at the male. When he didn't say anything out of surprise, she repeated the words, much angrier this time. "I said ****take it back****!" She screeched, voice bouncing back and forth off the cave walls.

The dragon recovered quickly, arrogant attitude back in a flash. "Or what?" He scoffed.

"Or I'll make you." Nightflight hissed, claws unsheathing with a wicked sort of gleam.

"Make me?" The dragon repeated, sounding amused. "That's rich!" He laughed for a moment, cackling as he threw his head back with the force of it. Toothless watched Nightflight carefully, heart in his throat as he studied her for weakness. To make sure that she wasn't faltering under the scorn, or growing nervous under the stares. But her whole form was rigid, anger and unleashed fury shooting off of her in waves. Even the crowd around them seemed to sense the change, growing still and silent as they watched the scene. "You can't see two inches in front of your nose!" The attacker sneered. "What makes you think that you can beat me?"

"Many things." Nightflight hissed. "But mostly it's just because I have an advantage over you."

"That's cute." He said dryly. "It almost makes me not want to amuse you."

"Oh, you want to amuse me?" Nightflight asked sharply, voice grating like sandpaper. "How about we put it to the test? Your word against mine." Before he could say anything, she added: "You think I'm weak? You think that I can't amount to anything now that I can't see? Then you're severely mistaken. I don't need sight to work around things as lowly as you; I have Berk."

"Really?" The dragon asked with a roll of his eyes. "A pretty poor substitute, if you ask me."

"Let's see." Nightflight said frostily. "Sunset. You, against me and Berk. We'll see who wins."

"That's uneven." The dragon growled, starting to grow uncomfortable.

Nightflight shrugged. "If you're too scared to add a puny little human into the mix." She said.

"I'm far from scared."

Nightflight paced forward suddenly, baring her teeth and thrusting her face right into the other's. Her clouded eyes bored into those of the dragons, and she pressed her nose tightly against his own. Toothless, Mistyeyes, and Shadowclaw sat off to the side, eyes wide with horror as they watched their plan unravel right in front of their eyes. They hadn't planned for this, they had planned for Nightflight to explain what had happened to change herself. Not to go around putting her and the humans up for fights. But they couldn't say anything right now, much less stop her. That'd make them seem weak. They could only watch as Nightflight challenged the male

dragon, setting up a fight that surely couldn't end well.

"Oh, you aren't, are you?" Nightflight asked.

The dragon narrowed his eyes slightly, not even leaning back slightly under her new advancement. He leaned forward a little, enforcing his words with his own movements as well. "Not even a little." He growled.

Nightflight smirked. "Then show me."

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **What can you do, when your good isn't good enough? **

And all that you touch tumbles down?

'**Cause my best intentions, keep making a mess of thingsâ€¦I just wanna fix it somehowâ€¦**

But how many times will it take? Oh, how many times will it take for meâ€¦

**To get it rightâ€¦?*

Get It Right - Lea Michele

I feel like that song fits likeâ€¦EVERY SINGLE PERSON IN THIS STORY. Seriously, go listen to it. I feel like I'll reference different parts of that same song a lot before this is over.

DANG. MY HAND. IT HURTS. IMMA KILL SOMEONE. IT HURTS. I NEED TO STOP.

Updates are niceâ€¦.reviews are niceâ€¦I think we can make a deal here ;)

47. Chapter 47

A/N: **Time after time, I walk the fine line. But something keeps bringing me back. **

**Time after time, I'm going in blind. I don't know which way I need to go. **

Time after time, I walk the fine line. But something keeps bringing me back.

**Time after time, I can't see the signs. **

Though all these roads lead me back to youâ€¦

Going in Blind - P.O.D.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

"Youâ€¦_what_!?" The last word finished off in a high shriek of disbelief, the dragons clustered around in a tight group giving a small wince at the volume. Astrid fumed angrily in front of them all,

Hiccup standing by her side with an awkward sort of look. His green eyes had flashed with surprise himself as he translated news the others had brought back, but he hadn't asked any of his own questions yet. So far, it had only been Astrid to freak out. And when she freaked out, she went all the way. The girl's nails were digging into her scalp, mussing up her hair even more than it already was as her blue eyes went wild with anger. "How could you do something so stupid!? I mean- this isn't even stupid! It's way past stupid! It's-it'sâ€¦I don't know what it is! But it's something!"

"I just thought that it would be an easy way to show them how humans and dragons can work together!" Nightflight blustered, voice seeming small next to Astrid's loud scream. The girl huffed angrily, coming up with nothing as the dragon barked out a jumbled reply. She turned swiftly, turning her glare over at Hiccup as she waited expectantly for him to relay the message. Looking somewhat torn, Hiccup rubbed his arm worriedly, mumbling out Nightflight's words to Astrid in a quiet tone. Mistyeyes sat dutifully beside Toothless, eyes slightly narrowed as she surveyed the scene.

Astrid seemed to lose a small smudge of her anger at the thought from the dragon, blanching a moment as her shoulders became much looser. "â€¦Wellâ€¦I guess it would be the best wayâ€¦" She mumbled, eyes sparkling with worry. Nightflight straightened at the prospect of her agreement, a small smile playing at the edges of her mouth. But Astrid shook her head quickly, deflating Nightflight's small burst of hope as she corrected herself firmly. "No." She snapped. "We can't put ourselves at stake like that. If we die during that fight, it'll just show them that humans are even weaker than they thought in the first place."

"I don't think that would be the worst problemâ€¦" Hiccup whispered in her direction.

"Why can't we just play off the fact that we beat them on Berk?" Astrid demanded.

Toothless spoke up where he sat, getting to his feet and walking forward a few paces from where he had been sitting beside Mistyeyes and Toothless. "Because that doesn't matter." Toothless said, Hiccup talking over him as he translated his words for Astrid. "If that meant anything to them, they wouldn't be undermining humans as much as they are right now. We came here in the first place to make sure that the other Night Furies would join with the humans. So that means that we already knew that they wouldn't join on their own." He shot Nightflight a sour look. "We were trying to tell them what Berk is about before some dragon went too far."

"Don't pretend you weren't telling me to do it." Nightflight flashed over to him.

"I told you not to take what he was saying about you by telling him the truth of Berk like we had discussed." Toothless sighed in an irritated huff. "Not to go out and throw your weight around."

"Excuse me!" Nightflight blustered, furious. "I'm the only one who-"

"Stop!" Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw yelled in sync.

Hiccup reeled, having a little bit more than a difficult time in keeping up with all these voices.

"I think Nightflight's plan is a good one!" Mistyeyes shot angrily, blue eyes blazing as she went forward to stand beside the black Night Fury. Ludi, who had been nestling herself into the dragon's back, was jarred by the movement, letting out a sharp yelp as she tried to regain her balance. Eventually, the little cat gave up, slipping off of her perch and jogging over neatly to Astrid. Gathering herself up, the cat sprang upwards with a mighty leap, making for Astrid's shoulder. The blonde hadn't been paying attention, turning around and letting out a sharp yell as the cat slammed into her shoulder, knocking her backwards and causing her to fall flat on her back against the ground. Winded, Astrid's eyes were wide as she looked at Ludi, who, unfazed, was settling down on her stomach neatly.

Nightflight stiffened considerably at Mistyeyes's support, freezing altogether as she turned towards the voice. Shock was written across her face, and Mistyeyes caught the look, eyes softening a little at the thought. But she shook her head quickly, shaking it out as she turned back to the waiting audience. Hiccup was looking at the dragon with an odd sort of look in his eyes, and it took Mistyeyes a moment to realize what it was.

It was encouragement.

He agreed with the plan too.

Finding hope in the small hint of attitude in the boy's gaze, Mistyeyes took in a deep breath of air before speaking. "Nightflight knows much more about the Pack than we do." Toothless's ears flattened at this, opening his mouth to say something. But Mistyeyes held up her tail, cutting him off before he could say anything. "I was leader once before, but that was with an entirely different group of Night Furies than what they are now. I don't recognize any of them anymore, and there's only one dragon here who does." She turned back to look at Nightflight. "If she says that the only way to show our case properly is with thisâ€|than I'm willing to follow her."

"But you won't." Shadowclaw pointed out fairly. Mistyeyes straightened, having forgotten the youth's presence at hand. Twisting around, she looked at the boy oddly, waiting for some kind of elaboration. "Nightflight was the one who challenged Frost." Nightflight straightened at the name, blinking rapidly with a small hint of surprise. She obviously had had no idea who she'd threatened in the first place. Mistyeyes rolled her eyes, trying not to think about it too much. "It's Nightflight and one other human." Shadowclaw twitched his ears. "No more dragons. Just two on one is enough, considering they don't think a human will help very much."

"That's the point, though." Nightflight pressed at the teen's uncomfortable looks. "We'll prove them all wrong."

As Hiccup translated the conversation, Astrid became quiet, pushing Ludi off gently as the cat huffed with irritation. Pushing up, the girl righted herself beside Hiccup, looking over at the boy carefully as he spoke out the words from the dragons. Her blue eyes were troubled as she listened, rubbing her arms tightly as if cold. The

words seemed to offer little comfort to the Viking's troubled mind as she looked at Hiccup carefully.

"I hope you're not willing to actually do this." Toothless growled, taking yet another step closer to Nightflight. "I'm sorry, Nightflight, but this is scatterbrained. You're taking the only two humans on Berk that believe you and our plan, and you're putting their lives on the line." Nightflight bared her teeth, but he wasn't finished. "Not only that, but Hiccup and Astrid are our friends." His eyes flashed dangerously at this, and Mistyeyes felt a sinkhole rip open the pit of her stomach. He would never let Hiccup or Astrid get near the fight. "We have no plan, no way of knowing our enemy's movements, and you can't see a foot in front of your nose! What kind of protection are you planning to offer?"

The black dragon bristled angrily. "They'll help me." She said tartly. "We'll fight together."

"How?" Toothless asked scathingly.

"Toothless can you just trust her?" Mistyeyes snapped, eyes flashing.

To her surprise, Toothless turned on her, eyes blazing. "As if you do!" He yelled, Mistyeyes stiffening as she flinched away from the harsh tone. Blinking rapidly, Toothless turned, looking at everyone around him as he spoke to all of them at once. "We have to face the facts: Nightflight just decided to make a change for herself! I'm not saying that she's lying to usâ€¦I'm just sayingâ€¦" Toothless turned over to Nightflight, eyes heavy with emotion. "â€¦can we really be so quick to trust her?"

"â€¦Toothlessâ€¦" Astrid managed. Even the girl looked a little stricken by this.

"Well?" Toothless sighed impatiently, still looking at Nightflight carefully. "You all might be willing to put your lives in her careâ€¦and you might be willing to trust her judgments with the Pack as well. And what to do in accordance to them." He paused, looking with despair at the female that he had once called a friend. It tore at his heartstrings to do this: to undermine the girl that he used to spend all day romping with. But he had to force out the words. "But I'm not too quick. I have to look out for all of us. I can't let any of you die."

He turned over, locking his withered look onto Hiccup, eyes raw with pain. "Please don't make me have to figure out how to deal with losing any of you."

Hiccup grew quiet at the plea, mouth setting into a firm line. Ludi whined at the boy's sour look, trotting over carefully and brushing herself worriedly against his leg. Astrid flinched, as if the words had slapped her across the face. Her blue eyes flickered over to Hiccup quickly, a small dash of fright going through her at the thought of losing him. Could she deal with it? Could she bear the thought of either of them going into this battle, and knowing they might not make it out alive? She remembered the pure rush of horror she had endured when Hiccup had first been rescued from the Night Fury cave when he went back in search of Toothless. The sheer amount of blood had just been enough to send the girl crashing down towards

the cave floor, to scream with agony as if the wounds were her own.

If Hiccup died, she knew herself better than that. She wouldn't be able to get past it. She couldn't handle just swallowing her sadness and leaving him. All she would want to do would be to crawl into a corner and die alongside him. Click as the thought might be, the image struck home for her. If Hiccup died, the whole plan shattered along with her world and her heart. She leaned over, grabbing the teen's hand tightly and holding on for dear life.

Hiccup perked at the touch, breaking eye contact with Toothless and looking over at her slowly. Astrid's eyes pricked and stung, her vision blurring almost at once as green eyes met blue. The forest clashed with the ocean, and everything seemed to stop in the moment. All Astrid could think back to was Hiccup's prostrate form on the stone, unresponsive to the girl's touch as she hovered over him, pleading with Thor to give her back her Viking.

_Please. _Her eyes begged of him. _I want you to stay with me._

Hiccup stared back at her, eyes searching her own frantically for a few moments. But then he ducked his head away, shattering their contact altogether as he let go of her hand. "No." He said flatly, catching the attention of all the others as they turned over to look at him. The boy stepped forward now, his limp that had been there a few days before having almost disappeared entirely. Hiccup turned over to Toothless, jaw locked backwards with determination. "_I _trust Nightflight. With my life." He paused, weighing the chances a moment before scrapping up his courage. "I'll fight with her. I'll go against the other Night Fury."

"No!" The objection rushed out of Toothless and Astrid at the same time, but the others seemed satisfied with the answer. Mistyeyes felt a small glow of pride for the Viking, chest swelling as she looked at Hiccup's firm look. Shadowclaw looked a little bit more thoughtful, turning and casting his eyes up towards the clouds. The sun was starting to drop from its maximum height in the sky; sunset was not far off at all. Nightflight looked too overcome at Hiccup's words, breathing having hitched slightly as Hiccup walked towards her.

"Nightflight has been through a lot." Hiccup said. "And Mistyeyes is right, she knows the Pack best. If this is what we have to do, I'm doing it."

"You don't have to." Surprisingly, the words came from Nightflight.

Hiccup glanced back towards her, crossing his arms a little uncomfortably over his chest. "Yeah, I do." He said softly, green eyes a little more troubled now. "I'm not going to have gone all this way to back down just because some scary Night Fury is out there hassling us. We beat that one Night Fury, and we win the respect of all the others. We just have this one last obstacle to overcome in order to get all of them on our side; I'm not going to back down when we're so close."

"It's dangerous." Toothless said, sounding almost whiny.

"Yeah, I kinda know that. But it's not the point." Hiccup said, voice barbed.

"But-"

"Are you sure?" Astrid asked, voice quiet.

Hiccup froze for a moment, surprised. He turned around, looking back at the girl with a small wince. The blonde looked at him steadily, looking as if she had just been delivered bad news, and was trying hard to deny it from her thoughts. She hugged herself tightly, knuckles bleached white as she looked on carefully. "You don't have any means of working together. You only started thinking about fighting with her at the same time likeâ€¦ten seconds ago."

"It's the same as flying." Hiccup said lamely.

Astrid opened her mouth as if to say something, but bit it back quickly. She merely stared at him almost mournfully. Her eyes were sucking up every detail of the boy as he stood glued to Nightflight's side, and that was when he started to be aware of Toothless's gaze too. The dragon's ears were flattened, face creased with worry and agony as he looked at his human. The blonde and the Night Fury looked identical, and their looks sent an odd thrill of nervousness through Hiccup as he sidled closer to Nightflight.

They looked like they were already mourning for him.

Like they were picking out the flowers for his funeral in their minds.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

By the time the sun was setting, and by the time that the shadows started to creep over the landscape, the Night Furies were already gathering around the claimed fighting spot. It was a wide grassy clearing that was near the base of the mountain; sharp rocks lined one side of the ring, and grass lined the other. Hiccup winced a little at the sight of the craggy stones, grimacing away from the thought of landing on them. "I'd stay away from the right side of the clearing." He whispered to Nightflight, the dragon perking as he spoke. "There's a bunch of sharp rocks there, they look kinda dangerous."

It seemed like the entire pack of dragons had made the journey down to the clearing just to see the fight's outcome. Little children barely weaned jumped from foot to foot with excitement, chattering like birds about the strange humans that thought they could win over the dragons. The younglings were playing mock-fights, howling out their game as they wrestled with one another.

"I'm a mean old human, and I'll rip you apart!" A speckled youngling squealed.

"Never!" The other little ones roared, pouncing forward and landing squarely on top of their target as they pummeled them with little claws. "We killed you! We killed you!" They chanted happily, purring and collapsing on themselves with their chuffs. The dragon that had been taking part in being the human sprawled awkwardly on the ground,

tongue sticking out humorously as he pretended to be dead. Hiccup watched the scene with a small frown, his stomach twisting in a million knots as he felt bile rising in his throat.

Ludi swelled at the children's' game, bristling as she lashed her tail back and forth rapidly. Brushing past the scene with her head tilted upwards slightly, the cat let out a sharp mew of anger. The little dragons grew distracted at this, eyes growing wide with confusion and surprise as all their heads turned as one, craning to get a look back at whatever had just interrupted them. Rolling his eyes at the stubborn behavior, Hiccup leaned down, grabbing up Ludi and giving her a stern look. The cat chirped happily at the look, beaming unnecessarily as she gave him her signature 'I-didn't-do-it-and-you-know-that' look. It reminded him of the old days, back when he had no idea why Toothless had gone off and left him, leaving him with a kitten that had abandonment issues, and a village that always bended around him in the crowd.

Giving a sad sigh at the thought, Hiccup turned wearily, placing Ludi down on Mistyeyes's back with a sorrowful look. Giving the cat one last pat on the head, he turned back and caught up with Nightflight, eyes downcast as he stared at the ground.

"It'll be okay." Nightflight murmured.

"What?" Hiccup asked, turning over to her with a confused look.

"You're nervous." Nightflight said softly, twitching her ears back and forth as she picked her way through the crowd. "Don't be. I'll make sure that you'll make it out alright."

"How did you know I was nervous?" He whispered, curious.

But the dragoness was unable to reply, stopping abruptly in the middle of the grassy clearing. Frost stood on the other side of the plain, eyes glinting with anger as he stared down both Hiccup and Nightflight. The talking and murmuring going through the crowd behind them came to a sudden halt along with the pair, all eyes going to rest on them as the air immediately grew tense and stifling. Elders, younglings, and youths all stared intently at the trio that stood in the middle of their large circle, Toothless, Mistyeyes, Shadowclaw, and Astrid all stood a little closer than the rest.

Before anything could happen, Astrid rushed up to Hiccup's side, breaking through the ring of dragons and grabbing onto his hand. "Let me fight in your place." She whispered loudly, Hiccup freezing with surprise at her sudden arrival. "Your shoulder is still hurt, and you still have you bad leg, and your other bad leg, and you only have your knife with you, and if something were to happen-"

"I'll be fine." Hiccup said quickly, eyes softening as he looked at her. "I'll be fine. I promise."

"That's what you always say." Astrid whispered brokenly, eyes welling up at once. "Then something goes wrong."

"Well this time I'll make sure to keep my word." Hiccup pressed. Pausing a moment, and aware of all the eyes on the Night Furies on him, Hiccup leaned forward, wrapping his arms bracingly around the

girl's frame. He closed his eyes tightly, holding her as close as he could. "We'll make it through this. I already told you." He looked over the girl's shoulder, towards the other Night Furies.

Toothless looked anxious, poised, it looked. As if he were ready to dash to Hiccup's rescue at the last moment if needed. Mistyeyes shot a pointed look in Toothless's direction, tail going out to rest over his shoulders calmly. It seemed like out of all of them, Mistyeyes seemed the most assured that Hiccup and Nightflight would actually make it through with the fight. Shadowclaw looked as if he thought the same, but his mind seemed to be wandering along with his eyes. The youngling shot Hiccup a comforting look for a moment or two before becoming sidetracked, letting his gaze flicker to and fro every once and a while, as if he were searching for some face in the crowd.

Astrid clung to Hiccup tightly, ducking her head low and pushing her forehead against the boy's shoulder with a small sigh. Nightflight shifted uneasily where she stood as the whispering got a little louder, and finally, Frost spoke up from where he stood. His eyes flashed with contempt as he spoke lazily, flexing his long, curved claws in and out slowly. They flashed in the dim light of what remained of the sun, and Astrid straightened at this, letting go of Hiccup and turning to glare sharply in the dragon's direction. Her nose wrinkled at the end, the way she always did when she was angry.

"Are we going to fight?" He drawled irritably. "Or are you just going to bore me to death? Why don't you quit while you're ahead? You're embarrassing yourself up here." The watching Night Furies sneered and roared at the comment, growing their confidence once more as smirks traveled through the group like wildfire. Frost straightened at the encouragement, feeding off of it as he became more and more cocky.

Hiccup opened his mouth to translate what he had said, but Astrid obviously didn't need a relay to get the message. Her eyes hardened, face growing a dark shade of red as she fumed angrily. She balled her hands into fists as she looked from one Night Fury to the other, making the connection as Nightflight bared her teeth. She hated him just as much as any of them did. Turning back over to Hiccup, Astrid hesitated a heartbeat or two before speaking. "â€|I don't know what he said, but make him regret it." Hiccup became quiet at this, blinking rapidly as he raised an eyebrow at her sudden mood change. Jolting, the girl corrected herself quickly, backtracking. "â€|I meanâ€|if you're going to do it, do it right." She threw a dirty look the dragon's way. "Send him packing." She coached.

"â€|sureâ€|" Hiccup mumbled, reaching into his vest and pulling out his small knife from its depths. He actually wanted to make sure that there wasn't any blood spilled here. The point was to display themselves working together to defeat a source of power, and influence themselves to the others. He didn't want to frighten the others into believing that their way was better; that was the opposite of what he wanted, or what any of them needed. "I'll be careful." He assured her, wishing that she would go away for once.

Rubbing her arms, Astrid suddenly grew a little colder. Shooting one last look over towards Frost, Astrid ducked her head, mumbling out a

small sentence that sounded oddly close to that of: 'I love you.' But before Hiccup could react, she had turned, rushing away from the center of attention and sprinting back to stand beside Toothless. Hiccup watched her go with a long look before turning as well, going over and standing squarely beside Nightflight. He took in a shaky breath, reaching over and placing one hand lightly on Nightflight's side. "We're in it together." He breathed out, the words only meant for Nightflight.

She gave a tense nod.

"Just listen to my commands. We'll make it."

"I trust you." Nightflight said solemnly.

Hiccup suddenly wished that she didn't.

The place had gone completely silent by now. All eyes were on them, the world filled with bated breath and tense statures. They had the floor, and they were certainly going to use it. Frost spoke up once more where he stood, grinning wickedly as he held himself aloft. After all, he had the privilege of representing the entire Pack. "So, would you like to strike first?" He purred, trying to snort back amusement as he took in the sight of the pair. "After all, I already know I have the upper wing. One human with a fake leg and a skimpy weapon. Another is a dragon that's all washed-up and blind to the world. I don't think you stand much of a chance."

Nightflight's eyes narrowed as she pressed up against Hiccup. "That just shows that you're the blind one here." She snapped, Hiccup giving a small smile at the words as they rang true. "Go ahead." Nightflight invited coolly. "Loser always goes first." Her eyes flashed at the words, and Frost let out a growl at the hidden taunt. His claws dug deep into the ground, and he crouched low to the grass, the stalks bending against his stomach as he prepared himself for a strike. It was an amazing feat of stealth, and yet Hiccup's mind was racing a million miles an hour. He realized small details that a normal person, uninfluenced by adrenaline, would disregard.

Frost's eyes betrayed him.

"He'll strike to the right." Hiccup mumbled quickly and lowly, voice only a small mumble. The Night Furies that were closest to them perked at his words, eyes filling with sudden interest as they caught a few of his instructions. At once, Nightflight's ear flicked down closer to him, eyes filling themselves with intensity as she gave a tense nod. "Dive to the left with me, not too far. As soon as you hear him hit the ground, go towards the sound." His words became quicker and tighter together as Frost started to fling himself forward. "Wait for my signal." Hiccup said in a rush, eyes narrowing as Frost got closer and closer. "Attack him with whatever you have, he'll be too surprised to do anything."

Frost pushed off the ground, sailing towards them like a fireball.

"NOW!" Hiccup screamed, bunching his muscles and diving to the left. He skidded on the ground as he felt Nightflight jump after him, catching the sight of her claws glinting in the coming moonlight. Skidding ungraciously on the ground, Hiccup caught himself quickly as

he whirled around. He tightened his hold on the knife, dashing forward and touching Nightflight's right side as he went, telling her that it was the way she had to run. "This way!" He barked out, the dragoness clambering to her paws at once, stumbling slightly.

Frost was picking himself up from the ground, spitting out grass with a disgusted look as he curled his tail with frustration. He whirled around to face Hiccup, the teen slowing with a mental curse as he took a defensive stance. He was too slow in getting back to the dragon; now that he was recovered, their element of surprise was gone. "I'll admit," Frost spat their way, eyes boring holes in Hiccup's clothing. "that was pretty impressive."

"Not too bad for a human." Hiccup growled through clenched teeth, shifting unconsciously as he bent his knees, digging his heels into the ground as best he could. "I guess that teaches you to never judge a person by looks." His green eyes flickered over to Nightflight, the Night Fury's ears twitching back and forth as she closed her eyes. She had taken to standing beside him, and yet by the way she was moving, Hiccup could guess what she was trying to do. She got her message that she was trying to send: _Keep him talking._

Nightflight couldn't see him, but she could find him by her hearing.

Frost gave a rumble of mockery. "You two aren't getting off that easily." He growled.

"It's been pretty easy so far." Hiccup puffed, glancing over to Nightflight once more. Her eyes were open now. Dimly, he wondered in the back of his mind why the dragon wasn't questioning his ability to understand him, but he dismissed the thought. These dragons never really did get close contact with humans most often, it wouldn't be surprising if none of them ever really stopped to question what the humans did. After all: why did humans do anything according to them? "If this is the best you have to offer, I'll get pretty bored here in a second."

"I'm just warming-" Frost's words ended in a startled shriek, Hiccup breathing out a quick sigh of relief as Nightflight shot forward from his side. In an amazing feat of hearing and skill, Nightflight flung herself forward, landing squarely on top of the Night Fury and tackling him to the ground in a rush. Her claws ripped through the protective layer of scales, the black coverings scattering across the ground around them as the dragoness bowled over her opponent. Frost screeched like a maniac, flailing and spitting mad as Nightflight struggled to hold him down.

But her eyesight failed her. She couldn't make sense of the rapid movements happening underneath her, Frost catching her by surprise and managing to fling her off of him. The female was flung off to the side, letting out a hiss as she skidded across the ground in a heap. Hiccup's concern spiked as the Night Fury didn't move for a moment, heart shooting up in his throat as he turned his back to Frost. Jogging forward clumsily, Hiccup hovered over the dragon, one hand going up to hold the side of his head worriedly. "Nightflight!" He yelled, panicking as the dragoness didn't reply. "Nightflight! Are you okay? Nightflight, answer me right now!"

Off to the side, he could see a few Night Furies tilt their heads

with confusion at his worried tone, looking pleasantly confused as they exchanged glances. But he paid no heed, watching with a hot rush of relief as Nightflight's cloudy eyes blinked themselves open. She shook her head back and forth rapidly, grimacing as she pushed herself up to her feet shakily. "Sorry." She puffed, sounding tired already. "I couldn't pinpoint him."

"It's fine." Hiccup said quickly, not letting her blame herself for a moment. "We're good, just a little bit longer."

Frost heaved himself to his feet, turning around with a snarl that ripped through his throat. His eyes were twin balls of fury, blood dripping down from his forehead and dripping into his eyes. He seethed with anger, shaking his head back and forth impatiently. "Cheap shot." He growled.

"I believe it's called 'embarrassing.'" Nightflight shot back. "At leastâ€¦for you."

Frost let out another roar of anger.

Toothless stiffened where he sat beside Mistyeyes, eyes wide with fright as he watched the scene, helpless to do anything at all. "This is bad." He whispered anxiously, shooting her a concerned look. "They're only making him mad! They need to finish this before it can get out of wing!" He looked back at them. His human and his childhood friend, up against the impossible. "They're already losing ground, Mistyeyes, how can they possibly do this?"

Astrid turned at this, catching onto his worried tone as she gave a small frown.

He expected words of encouragement from Mistyeyes, but she didn't even look away from the fight. Her blue eyes were steady and serious as she observed the battle, wings twitching every so often at Toothless' worries and fears. "The point is to prove themselves, no matter how long it takes. They both know this. That's why they're doing it in the first place." She paused, eyes traveling down to Hiccup's thin form; one thin Viking against a large Night Fury five times his size, it seemed. "â€¦Hiccup will always do what he has to." She murmured.

Shadowclaw's shifted uneasily at this.

Frost dove forward once more, Hiccup letting out a hastily-thought-of plan right on the spot. "Crouch down low! Go forward!" He yelled, following his own advice as he took off. Nightflight jerked, caught off-guard by the boy's sudden shout. But she had promised to follow all his words as carefully as she could, the dragoness doing her best to sprint forward while crawling close to the ground. But when Hiccup looked back over his shoulder, he could tell that it was too late already. She wasn't going fast enough; Frost landed right on top of her back.

Stiffening as the dragon sunk his claws into the female's back, Hiccup retraced his steps at the sound of Nightflight's pained howl. He withdrew his blade, shooting himself forward and stabbing it into the shoulder of the attacker, wincing as he did the movement. Blood washed over the metal of his weapon, but he paid no heed to it. It served its purpose well as Frost howled, his grip loosening on

Nightflight as he started to turn back towards whatever had made the pain blossom in his joint.

Nightflight took the chance wisely, a sharp roar ripping its way from her chest as she rocketed to her feet, rolling her shoulders and jerking herself upright. She bucked Frost clear off her shoulders, the male rocketing off from his perch and lancing awkwardly on one foot. The force had thrown him clear off from Hiccup's knife as well, the boy only managing to keep hold of it as the dragon was ripped out. Sure that he had already caused enough damage than what he wanted in the first place, Hiccup gave a small grimace as he wiped away the blood on the grass.

The Night Furies gathered around them were now watching with renewed interest, eyes wide with shock.

Frost's muscles trembled as he got to his feet, one eye closed in immense pain as blood gushed down the side of his left shoulder. He must have landed on his foot wrong, the Night Fury giving a hiss of pain as he held one foot up in the air, using his other three legs for balance. Eyes hardening at the sight of the dragon in pain, Hiccup spoke up firmly, tightening his hold on the weapon just in case. "We don't have to do this." He said firmly, not only talking to Frost, but to the group of Night Furies as a whole. "Our only purpose here is to show you how dragons and humans can work together as equals." He gestured to both him and Nightflight, the blind dragon straightening self-importantly at the explanation.

"We've shown you what you can do on Berk. Not only will you become close with othersâ€¦but you'll get stronger too. Alone, you're powerless." Against his better judgments, Hiccup gestured over to Frost, who bristled furiously at the notion of him being unable to defend himself against a human. "But together, you can be so much more." Turning to Frost now, Hiccup gave a small sigh. "We don't have to fight." He said, taking a few small steps forward.

With each step, Astrid shook her head worriedly.

Hiccup reached out invitingly, green eyes cautious as Frost snarled at the gesture. "It doesn't _have_ to be this way. It never does. Dragons and humans can learn to work together if they only _try_. Nightflight used to hate humans, and even she realized that it was pointless. That all of this is for nothing. You can have such a better futureâ€¦if you only put your biases aside." He stopped, exactly a foot away from Frost now. He stood in between Nightflight and Frost, eyes steady as he reached out once more.

"Don't." Astrid croaked, vision blurring once again.
"Hiccupâ€¦"

Toothless looked at her strangely, feeling panic start to flutter in his chest like butterflies. Perking, he turned back to the scene going on the clearing, getting to his feet already. Mistyeyes shot Toothless a frustrated look, blue eyes blazing at his movement. "This is their fight." She grumbled out softly, the words coming out as a harsh whisper. "If you get involved, that'll just make it even worse. We're already in the deep already, we don't need anything more."

"Something is wrong." Toothless protested lowly.

Shadowclaw came forward, Ludi perched on his back as she watched the proceedings with an anxious gaze. Her ears were slicked down to her head, her little claws digging into Shadowclaw a little painfully as the younger dragon winced. But the pain seemed to be the last thing on his mind as he studied the fight wearily. "I think Toothless is right." He whispered, catching Mistyeyes's attention as she turned and looked back at him questioningly. "I think Frost is catching on to their tactics."

"What does that mean?" Toothless asked stiffly.

But Mistyeyes seemed to realize it before him, eyes flashing as she dug her claws into the ground tightly. "It means he knows how to break their link." She said gravely. "He'll go after Hiccup. Without him, Nightflight doesn't stand a chance."

Toothless went rigid at this, eyes flying open as he whirled around to look back at his human. Hiccup was still trying to persuade Frost, hand fully extended as he looked down firmly. His determination was set as he told Frost things like: 'I don't want to hurt you. It's the last thing I want to do.' But he didn't realize that Frost wasn't paying any attention at all. The dragon's eyes flashed from Hiccup to Nightflight, gauging the distance and how long it would take the blind dragon to catch on.

For her credit, Nightflight was doing exceptional right about now. Though blinded, bleeding slightly, and stumbling every so often, she looked almost as powerful and alert as she used to be. Her teeth were bared angrily, her form black against the growing moonlight behind them. But she was a few feet away from Hiccup; if anything happened, she probably wouldn't be able to get to the boy fast enough. The thoughts stabbed a burning hot nail of panic deep into Toothless's chest, and he shot up once more to his feet.

But once more, Mistyeyes held out her tail for him to stop, eyes closing firmly as she blocked him. "Stop." She said steadily. "This still isn't your fight."

Toothless cursed underneath his breath. "I don't care! That's my human!"

"Who's trying to prove a point." She said fairly. "You'll ruin everything if you go out and get into the mess."

"I'll save him!" Toothless protested.

"Will you?" She challenged.

By then it was far too late. Shadowclaw gave a sharp intake of breath, growing two inches taller as he stiffened with terror. On Mistyeyes's back, Ludi gave a wail of anguish. Frost had leaped forward, a furious growl ripping through the silence that had settled over the crowd as he made for Hiccup's throat. The boy gasped loudly, green eyes flying wide open as he tried to stumble backwards. Nightflight snapped to attention, ears perked and straining to make out where the pair were standing as she rushed forward blindly. Clumsily, Hiccup dove to the left abruptly, skidding across the grass as he tried to get out of the dragon's way in time.

Frost landed a few feet to the side; where he had been not less than a second ago. Hissing through his teeth, Hiccup held his stomach as he forced himself back to his feet, arms and forehead skinned painfully as blood started to seep from the wounds. Winded, the boy struggled to take in air and call out to Nightflight, who was still struggling to figure out where they were as she came closer and closer. She walked like she was on pins and needles, like every step pained her.

"Ni-" Hiccup's words were cut off as Frost slammed into his side, pushing him down and flattening him to the grass. Hiccup groaned as the full force of the blow left him dazed. Struggling to make his brain stop spinning, the boy attempted to struggle out of the heavy weight on top of him. Feeling the attempt, Frost chuckled darkly, claws digging into the boy's skin as Hiccup let out a sharp cry of pain. Nightflight stiffened at this, looking over in their general direction, ears flicking back and forth attentively.

Around them, the Night Furies that had started to lean forward with anticipation were slowly deflating. Their brief hope of a possibly-spectacular feat of a win were slowly disintegrating. Toothless's scales prickled with alarm and frustration as the Night Fury kneaded the ground with his paws. "They were so close!" He wailed, Mistyeyes not even breaking her intense eye contact with what was going on in front of her. "Look at them! They look disappointed! We were so close! They were ready for it!" Pausing heatedly, Toothless started to barge forward. "I'm helping them! They need me!"

"Stop!" Shadowclaw barked furiously. "Just stay where you are for once!"

Winded, Hiccup couldn't call out for Nightflight, the dragoness slowly shrinking backwards at the silence that suddenly greeted her. Frost turned with a sneer of contempt, eyes narrowing as he gave a wicked grin. "You see?" He prompted to the crowd watching, disgruntled looks meeting his words as Night Furies starting to lose their brief moment of excitement. Mumbles and grumbles were spreading through the crowd, dragons shifting this way and that as they started to space themselves away from Mistyeyes, Toothless, and all the others in their party, making them their own little space as the circle parted. The avoided people winced as eyes went from Hiccup to them, Frost's words sparking impatience and eye rolls aimed in their direction.

"These people are as frightening as a couple of Terrible Terrors." Frost said dismissively. "They go off thinking they're so high and mighty, and then they can't live up to their threats." He swept his tail in a wide arc. "If you want to follow a group like this, you'll eventually fall out with them. It's inevitable, really."

Talon, who had taken to sitting silently off to the side, raised his gaze so that it locked with Mistyeyes's own. The female stiffened as the two met gazes, and she winced almost at once. She looked away from her father, curling her tail tighter around her feet as she flattened her ears, closing her eyes and turning her head pointedly. Beside Talon, Leafdapple sighed softly, shoulders drooping with obvious disappointment. Catching the change in mood, Shadowclaw wilted as well, shame filling him from ears to tail-tip.

Hiccup's eyes widened a fraction at the dragons words, face creasing over with defeat as he ducked his head. Bringing his arm closer to him, the only thing that he could move that was out of reach of Frost, he balled his hand into a strained fist, hand shaking as he did so. Toothless let out a small mumble in the back of his throat, a small noise of objection. But it was too late. It was clear what had happened: their small window had collapsed in on itself.

They'd lost.

Frost turned over to Nightflight, grin only spreading at her puzzled expression. "Do you have anything to say for yourself?" He asked, sounding like a father that was reprimanding their daughter. He sneered. "You aren't so tough without someone to help you, huh? Seems like you need this human a lot more than he needs you." Hiccup opened his mouth to say something, but was cut off once more as Frost only tightened his hold. He let out a squeak of pain, Nightflight stiffening at the yelp. "What happens if he ever realizes that? What happens if humans grow tired of dragons?" Not waiting for an answer, he gave one himself. "They kick them out of the island? We outnumber them by hundreds! Why bother associating ourselves with those who are weaker than us?"

"They're not weaker." Nightflight protested weakly.

"Really? I don't see this pathetic scrap doing anything to save himself." Frost snapped.

Astrid watched the scene, unable to understand and unable to comprehend anything at all. Eyes flashing wildly from Frost, to Nightflight, and then back down to Hiccup, she tried to think of anything she could do. Anything that could maybe help them. But Frost was a good few feet away; though right in front of her, she wouldn't be able to get close to him without him noticing her on the way over. And she had no weapon, either. What was she supposed to do, take him down with her bare hands?

She straightened at the thought, blinking as she looked down at her hands blankly.

"We're not beaten yet." Nightflight snarled thickly.

"Really? Is that so?" He asked skeptically, humor lining the edges of his voice like decoration. "I don't see you making a move to come at me. Or is this you just talking again?"

The crowd watching narrowed their eyes at the words, glaring at Nightflight critically.

Standing awkwardly across from Frost, Astrid clapped her hands together with a loud smack.

Frost turned towards her, eyeing her with hatred as the blonde repeated the odd movement. Toothless turned and looked down at her oddly, titling his head as he looked her questioningly. Rocking back and forth on her heels, Astrid forced herself not to look away from Hiccup, who's attention she had managed to grab as well. Green eyes met her own, and Astrid gave another loud clap, almost falling into some sort of musical rhythm. Hiccup's eyes softened a little at her movements, a small smile gracing his pained face as she did it again

and again.

Nightflight's ear twitched.

"What're you doing?" Frost asked, voice sharpened with impatience. "Isn't it bad enough that you've made a fool of yourself enough? This is just showing them all how ridiculous humans are!" Astrid didn't react to the words, not understanding them as she merely gave another clap. "If you all want to follow in the footsteps of such ridiculous creatures, we might as well not even be Night Furies anymore!" Frost raised his voice to indicate the watching dragons. "They're as dumb as a rock in our cave." His lip curled with distaste as he spoke the words.

Astrid clapped again.

"What're you doing?" Shadowclaw asked with exasperation. "I'm embarrassed enough as it is."

She clapped again.

Nightflight flattened herself down towards the ground.

Frost was losing his patience. "Would you just stop doing whatever is it you're-"

Nightflight lunged forward in the direction of the claps, claws shooting out at once as she crashed dead-on into Frost. The crowd gasped in perfect sync at the new development, Nightflight knocking Frost clear off of his feet as she slammed into him. Teeth and claws going a million miles an hour, Nightflight gave her attack her all, Frost and her a mere blur as they rolled across the ground. Hiccup was up probably quicker than he should have been, the boy holding the side of his head with a slight wince as his head spun. But he forced himself to recover quickly, blinking back the dark spots that had rushed into his vision as he righted himself.

Leaning down and scooping up his knife once more, Hiccup rushed forward, trying to keep up with the dragons as best he could. One-edge once more, the crowd found themselves leaning forward once more. Talon and Leafdapple had twin looks of amazement on their faces, Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes relishing in their faces for their own, different reasons.

The crowd watched as Hiccup skidded to a stop, eyes calculating as he watched Nightflight. She'd gained a lot of ground with her surprise attack, but she was slowly losing it. She was doing her best to put as many non-lethal injuries on Frost, but it was hard to do when you couldn't see anything. She floundered in her attacks, getting clumsier and clumsier as she tried to regain her advantage. Breathing quickening little by little, Hiccup turned quickly, looking back towards the other side of the clearing with a profound sense of thought. His eyes landed on the jagged rocks that marked the start of the Pack's home. Panting in and out heavily, Hiccup's mind went a mile a minute, and he whipped himself around to look back towards Nightflight.

"Kick him off you!" Hiccup yelled, cupping his hands over his mouth to be heard over the other Night Furies that were talking excitedly. "Straight off! You'll throw him straight backwards!" Nightflight

faltered a moment in her strikes, trying to decide where in the world she was, or needed to be in order to rocket him off of her. Closing her eyes tightly, Nightflight went lax for a moment, allowing herself to be taken over as Frost pinned her down to the ground. Trusting in Hiccup's directions, Nightflight remained limp, waiting until she felt the pressure of teeth increasing on her throat.

In doing so, Frost had lost some of his strength in holding her down. Scrapping up enough energy to perform the trick, Nightflight heaved herself forward, hooking her legs underneath Frost and right up against his stomach. Pushing upwards with a massive groan of effort, Nightflight jabbed straight out with her legs, yanking Frost off of her with a massive push. The dragon was thrown backwards, desperately trying to regain balance as he slammed into the grass with a painful crushing noise.

Hiccup cursed mentally. Though it was a formidable effort, the kick hadn't been enough. He was still a yard or two away from the rocks. Biting his lower lip, Hiccup sighed quickly before cupping his hands around his mouth once more. "Hey!" He shouted loftily, watching with a successful grin as Frost's head shot up. The dragon's eyes blazed at the smug tone that the child held, and Hiccup willed it to be enough. "Good fight! Or should I say good fight for a five year old?" Frost growled, getting to his feet slowly.

Nightflight was edging forward, one glass once more as she guided herself closer to Hiccup by the sound of his voice. She was losing herself, it looked like. Scrapes, cuts, bruises, and gashes lined her scales every which way, and her breath came in uneven gasps. She was a trooper already for staying in the fight for so long; Hiccup could never have asked any more of her. But she was running out of time, and Hiccup knew that pretty soon she wouldn't be able to go on. He had to do this fast. Good thing was that he was pretty good at making people angry.

"You couldn't pin me if I sat three feet away from you!" Hiccup shouted, the watching Night Furies eyeing him carefully at the words. Frost was breathing deliberately slow, as if trying to calm himself down by force. "Oh, wait!" Hiccup laughed. "I _am _three feet away from you!" Frost growled, pacing slowly forward as his eyes narrowed furiously. Hiccup made a show of rolling his eyes. "I'm _so _scared." He taunted. "I got away from you once already; are you really planning on letting me show you up again? I'm kinda confused on where your priorities are!"

Frost was less than two feet away from him by now, and Nightflight was slowly bringing up his rear. Her eyes were narrowed with concentration as she got closer and closer to Frost, and Hiccup realized that she was slowly making the connection that he already had. "It's not like you would have enough room, anyway. Combining your big ego with all these _rocks, _there's barely enough room to breathe!" Nightflight's eyes lit up at the hint, and she gave a tense nod.

The waiting Night Furies were on-edge.

Frost let out a roar, gathering himself and preparing to spring. But Hiccup was much faster. "NOW!" He yelled for the second time, turning and diving out of the way. Nightflight reared up on her hind legs, letting out a sharp cry as she threw her weight forward. Knocking

into Frost's backside, Nightflight shoved him clear off his feet yet again. The dragon shot forward, thrown to the side and unable to stop himself before he met with his fate.

Hiccup pushed himself up to his knees wearily, grimacing at the blood that was staining his clothes by now. Turning around, he watched with grim satisfaction as Frost sliced himself on the sharp rocks. The stones embedded themselves in his skin, the Night Fury letting out a howl of anguish as he tried to move out of the entanglement. Every time he moved, the rocks tore at his skin, ripping off his scales and scattering them in a discarded pile around him. Eventually, with a groan of pain, he gave up. Flopping down on the ground in a defeated heap, Frost seethed under his breath as shame and humiliation swamped over him. "Impossible." He croaked. "How could you beat me?"

"It was easy." Hiccup said tightly.

"You did it!" Astrid shrieked, cutting him off as the girl crashed into him full-on. The blonde wrapped her arms tightly around her Viking, shoulders shaking as she clung tightly to him. "I can't believe it! You're safe! I'm so glad!" She pulled back, eyes sparkling as she beamed at Hiccup.

"Thanks to you!" Hiccup said excitedly, forgetting to act mature as he shared her happiness.

"Hiccup!" Toothless charged forward, breaking up Hiccup and Astrid as he pushed his nose tightly into Hiccup's chest. He purred loudly, wings trembling at his sides as he shook with the relief. "Don't you ever scare me like that again!" He scolded sharply, Hiccup giving a laugh at the words. "This is probably the third time you've made me tense in the past week alone! You have to learn to stop!"

"I'll try." Hiccup said fondly.

"Good show." Mistyeyes teased, blue eyes glinting as Shadowclaw giggled at her side. Ludi hopped up and down on the dragon's head, the dragon not even thrown off balance by the cat's movements. She turned to Nightflight, tone softening along with her expression. "See, Toothless?" She prompted gently. Toothless tore himself away from his human, turning and looking over at her blankly. "I told you we had nothing to worry about." She leaned over, pressing her nose to Nightflight's in a sign of affection. Drawing back, she gave a smile that Nightflight could undoubtedly hear in her voice. "We owe you a lot, now." She said. "Don't let us forget that anytime soon."

Nightflight blinked, stunned. "I-I won't."

Hiccup felt a warm burst of affection, pushing himself away from Toothless and Astrid as he rushed over to Nightflight. He pushed himself up, extending his arms and wrapping them tightly around Nightflight's neck. The dragon stiffened under the movement, eyes widening with surprise and shock as she looked down at Hiccup. The boy buried his face into her scales, chest aching. "Thank you." He breathed out hoarsely. "Thank you for everything."

Around them, the Night Furies watched the interaction silently, trying to get over the fact that a human and a dragon had just defeated one of their most skilled fighters. At first, nothing

happened. But then a figure stepped out of the crowd, Mistyeyes going rigid beside Toothless as she shifted closer to him unconsciously. Talon paced forward until he was at least two yards away from them. His gaze shifted from one to the other, lingering only a moment more on Mistyeyes before he looked back at both Hiccup and Nightflight. The boy was still holding onto the Night Fury, but he had twisted his head around to look curiously in Talon's direction. As the dragon looked at Hiccup, he could easily tell by the stance the boy held that he was protective of the dragon he was hugging. That he would fight longer to prove not only himself, but Nightflight as well.

Slowly, Talon closed his eyes and kneeled. Flattening himself low to the ground, the old Night Fury bowed in deepest respect, his whole body going low to the grass as he ducked his head. Hiccup's eyes widened, and his arms slipped back down to his side as he looked at what was happening with disbelief. Off to the side, Leafdapple shot them all a proud smile before doing the same as Talon. She tucked her wings close to her sides, settling down quickly and ducking low to the ground.

Slowly, one by one, all of the other Night Furies did the same, the clearing going silent as they all bowed before the victors. The heads slowly bobbed down, figures ducking themselves low to the grass, as they left only Mistyeyes, Shadowclaw, Toothless, Ludi, Astrid, Nightflight, and Hiccup standing alone. The crowd wasn't jeering at them or making fun, even Fleetfoot managed to be subdued for once as he genuflected.

Every single Night Fury there had shrunken low to the plain.

The only ones standing was their rag-tag group.

And now they were left wondering what happens next.

(~***~) (~***~) (~***~) (~***~)

A/N: **So I throw up my fist, throw a punch in the air!**

And accept the truth: that sometimes life isn't fair!

I'll send out a wish; I'll send up a prayer!

**And finally! Someone will see! How much I care! **

Get It Right - Lea Michele

Told you I would reference to that song more than once ;)

Dang. Oh my JEEBUS. Darn. This thing. Too long. WAY too freaking long. I better get some props for this, cause this is 15 PAGES LONG. 15 FLIPPING PAGES. NOT JUST 15 PAGES. NO. 15 FLIPPING PAGES. I'm so tired. Finals. So tired. Please help me. Save me. ;^;

On a more serious note, I really hope I did this chapter justice! This is my most reviewed story, and I really want to make sure you all know that I'm thinking about you guys all the time, trying to think up ways to make this story even better for you all! It means a lot to me that you would stick it out with me this long, and now that summer is on its way, I'll have CRAPLOADS of free time for you all!

Heck, some days, if I get enough reviews, I can update TWICE a day. Seriously, I've done it before over summer.

So I guess it all depends on what you all say in my review box :
)

Summer starts next Tuesday for me at 11:30, so brace yourselves!

GO VOTE ON MY POLL. IT'S ABOUT THIS STORY~! ((Sorry for the long note lol))

48. Chapter 48

A/N: Poof!

A wild Sandfire Kat appears! :O

Sandfire Kat uses 'Summer Homework Procrastination!'

IT'S ((unfortunately)) SUPPER EFFECTIVE!

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The Night Furies were gathered in a large group, all milling about and waiting patiently in the main cavern of the cave. The glow from the moon slanted through the large opening, lighting up the puddles that littered the ground, and casting an eerie glow on the stalactites that clung tightly to the roof. Though packed to the brim, the cavern had gone silent as the tense aura hanging over the crowd slowly intensified. Eyes that gleamed in the darkness turned to train themselves on the group standing at the head of the room. The group of dragons and humans that had come to the Night Furies were now taking their place on a large ledge up above, peering down at the cluster of reptiles as they hovered in plain sight. Standing up higher than any other, and in plain sight of all that were below, it was obvious that they were planning to speak.

Hiccup stood beside Astrid, neck craned awkwardly to the side to make space for Ludi, who had draped herself low across his shoulder. The cat looked quite anxious to be so high up, looking down owlshly at the people below as she let out a nervous trill. Hiccup patted the cat comfortingly, praying to Thor that she wouldn't suddenly flip out and cause him to slip right off the slippery platform. It wasn't that big, in its own right, and squeezing a bunch of other people on it at the same time, he had to focus to stay upright without wobbling. And his fake leg wasn't helping much, either.

He turned, perking as he caught sight of Astrid. The girl's face was creased with concentration as she bit her lower lip, gasping every so often as she had to regain her footing. Her eyes were rounded out with a small hint of fright, and against his better judgment, Hiccup let out a small laugh. At once he got the reaction he should have guessed for as Astrid whirled around to glare hotly in his direction. Deciding that if he was going to be hated, he might as well make things official, he had the nerve to keep going. "You're afraid of heights?" He snickered, biting back his laughter as his shoulders shook up and down. "Seriously?"

Astrid soured at once, eyes narrowing at once as she jabbed an

accusing finger into his stomach. The blow nearly knocked Hiccup right off of the perch, had he not caught himself at the last moment. "I am not afraid of heights." She said firmly, voice barbed with anger and irritation as her glare burned holes into Hiccup's clothes. Blinking a few times, the girl turned swiftly away from him, pointing her nose up high into the air as she crossed her arms over her chest. "I am afraid of falling down and stabbing myself on those pointy rock things down below."

"They're called stalagmites." Hiccup said blandly.

Astrid once again jabbed him in the stomach, a silent warning of murder shining in the depths of her blue eyes. "You're pushing it." She said sharply, nose wrinkling in the way that it always did when she got angry. Hiccup raised both his hands up in surrender, mouth setting into a surprised line as he realized that she was a little bit more than serious. Ludi chirped with fright where she was slung over the boy's shoulder, clapping her paws rapidly on Hiccup's chest as she squealed.

Hiccup opened his mouth to say something, when it was cut off abruptly as his attention went elsewhere. Catching his surprised look, Astrid snatched her hand back to herself, turning around and blinking rapidly. Mistyeyes had stepped forward along with Toothless and Nightflight. Standing in the center of the two, the gray dragon let out a sharp roar to call attention, looking confident and sure of herself as she leaned over the edge of the ledge they were all perched on. She showed no fear in her perch, and Hiccup had to admit that he felt a small flash of pride at the way the three seemed to be getting along. They were much tighter now, it seemed.

The dragons below stilled at the call of attention, heads turning up to look curiously at the trio. Narrowing his eyes, Hiccup roved through the crowd below them, searching for the form of Frost. Sure enough, he landed on the dragon after a few moment of searching, smirking as he felt a small flash of satisfaction. The dragon was wincing and grimacing as he settled down to sit awkwardly on the stone, trying not to aggravate his injuries he'd gotten after facing Hiccup and Nightflight. Sure, the two of them hadn't left the fight unscathed themselves, but Frost would obviously be limping for a very long time, it seemed. And the fact did not cross Hiccup's mind without a small smile worming its way forward.

Astrid caught the expression, rolling her eyes as she gave a small laugh. Leaning over, the blonde grabbed Hiccup's hand tightly in her own, intertwining their fingers without a word. Hiccup turned back to look at her, searching her gaze with his own before saying anything. "Two more obstacles." He whispered, hoping that his voice wouldn't travel too far over the waiting dragons. "First we have to make sure they're with us." He jerked his head to the side to indicate the Night Furies. In the process, he hit his head against Ludi, who let out a sharp snap as she once again hit him with her paws. But he paid no heed to the whining feline. "And then we gotta go back to Berk." He finished rather lamely.

Astrid let out a gusty sigh. "I wonder which one will be harder." She commented dryly.

"Oh, I dunno." Hiccup hissed. "I think the choices make it pretty obvious."

"Dragons and dragonesses!" Mistyeyes declared, cutting through the pair's conversation and causing them to go silent. "We've traveled here from Berk to address a growing problem in both of our societies: the lack of order and power.'" She paused a moment as the Night Furies grumbled back and forth among one another. She raised her tail for silence, but it was a moment before they calmed down enough for her to be heard. "Back on Berk, the Villagers are being reduced to their old ways of killing dragons as they go after Night Furies, who they believe are the evil ones."

"So why should we go there if they want our heads?" A dragon yowled, leaping to his feet in defiance.

Mistyeyes let out a sharp hiss, silencing his angered tone as he clamped his jaws shut bad-temperedly. Taking a short breath to calm herself, Mistyeyes answered his question with as much care as she could manage. "Berk believes you all are to blame for the Raids that you committed against them." She paused a moment, choosing her words carefully as she glanced over in Nightflight's direction. "They blame you, when all you did was follow the words of your leader."

The dragons looked over at Nightflight, a few mumbles rippling through the gathered crowd as they gazed up at her. Hiccup stiffened at once, ready to stick up for Nightflight as he took a small step forward. But then he realized with a pang of surprise that the tone of the dragons below was not that of anger anymore. The words were sharp and barbed, but not dragon made a move to outright accuse her of anything she had done or attempted to do in the past. Instead, they sat quietly, looking at her curiously, as if unsure what to think about her anymore.

The thought made an excited smile spread over Hiccup's face. "It worked!" He whispered close to Astrid's ear. The girl started at his voice, turning and looking at him with confusion. He poked her shoulder, causing the girl to flare with annoyance. "Nightflight's plan worked!" He pressed. "She won in the fight and showed that she actually did turn over a new leaf! The other dragons don't know what to think of her now. They can't be angry and they can't be happy."

"That's better?" Astrid asked skeptically, raising an eyebrow.

Hiccup sighed in exasperation. "I think I'd rather have people not know what to think of me than have them wanting me dead, wouldn't you?"

Astrid smirked. "I think you get too much of both of those situations."

Hiccup stared at her fixedly for a few moments before slowly turning away from her. "I'm done talking to you." He mumbled.

The blonde smiled, rolling on her feet as she turned back to the crowd. "Good." She gushed.

"Unfortunately, Berk isn't aware of that fact." Mistyeyes went on, flashing the pair a sharp look that obviously said: 'You'd-better-shut-up-or-I'll-come-over-there.' "So we've come here

with a proposition for you all. And that offer is for you all to come back to Berk with us and see for yourselves the way that the island works and functions alongside humans." She turned, nodding over to Nightflight and Hiccup. "These two showed you only a sample of what you all could become if you were to join forces with the humans. They've shown you how you could become stronger and better in time, and that no matter what happens, you'll always have someone at your side to help you along."

"But if the humans want to kill us, what's the point of going?" Leafdapple asked softly.

Shadowclaw's ears flicked down to his head in disappointment at the dragoness.

"You'll have to make an effort towards it." Mistyeyes instructed, narrowing her eyes as she recognized the familiar face. "When you go hunting and spot something that could feed the entire Pack for a week, do you just sit there and wait for it jump into your claws? You have to walk carefully, and work towards the goal in order to make sure that you acquire your better future." Hiccup twitched, silently thinking that comparing 'hunting' to 'joining Berk' might not be such a good idea. But the metaphor seemed to have some sort of influence on the listeners as Hiccup caught a few nods or excited looks aimed their way.

"It won't be easy." This time it was Toothless who spoke. He got to his feet, going over and standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Mistyeyes, green eyes flashing as he looked down to the others. He was much bigger and taller in comparison to the dragoness, making Mistyeyes seem almost small in his presence. "It'll take a lot of work and maybe a little bit of pressure to make sure that the humans understand that what happened was just a fluke that never should have taken place. But isn't a little bit of work worth it in the end?"

"What about the children?" A dragoness said sharply. "I'm certainly not taking my younglings out somewhere where they could be caught and killed!"

"Yeah!" Another called out. "We could be killed doing this!"

"I'm not putting anyone I love in danger!"

"You won't be!" Nightflight screeched, powerful voice ringing out over the dragons and silencing them at once. All eyes went to her, and yet for once she didn't shrink underneath the weight. Instead, she tilted her chin upwards with authority that she had held, once upon a time. "No dragons will be harmed during this, we can promise you." Toothless and Mistyeyes swung around to look at her with surprise, eyes widening slightly. They couldn't promise anything like that.

But Nightflight was far from finished. Digging her claws into the rock beneath her, she swept on in her spiel. "Look at yourselves." She ordered, the crowd turning and staring curiously back and forth from one another. "You aren't the way you used to be. You aren't powerful and you aren't capable of what you used to be able to do." She hesitated a moment, ducking her head with a flash of guilt. "I suppose that it's my fault you're like this now."

She shook herself, forcing herself to go in instead. "And I take full responsibility." She corrected, backtracking. "Which is why I'm here trying to get you all to go to Berk. I've witnessed what goes on on that island, andâ€¦I have to sayâ€¦it's better than anything you could imagine. It's everything that this place is lacking." Nightflight swept her blind gaze through the milling Night Furies critically. "We've survived without humans for years upon years." She said firmly. "And for a while, we were fine. But look at it all now: you don't know when someone had left because you're so unorganized, you're tromping around the forests at random times scare away the prey, and your biases leave you resentful and bitter towards each and every dragon you come into contact with! Sure, I'll be the first to admit, we _did_ survive without humans fantastically for a long time. But thatâ€¦that was just luck! And your luck is running out! You're losing food, capability, and overall character when you're here!

"The dragons at Berk are the opposite of you all! They have friends, a life, family, and food to last them ages! They hold bonds with humans that any of you would be lucky to even fathom! They're safe and protected within the ocean that surrounds Berk, and they would be willing to put their lives on the line for the good of everyone else that lives with them. It might be risky to join Berk, and it might be dangerous to go out there and take a stand. But it pays off in the end! There is always a storm to get through in order to reach the light on the other side! It just depends how much you want this future for your children, and even your children's children! We can weather the storm together, if you all band together and brace yourselves for it."

Complete and utter silence met her words, startled looks slapped over the crowd below as they stared open-mouthed at the Night Fury. Toothless looked like he had just been slapped, eyes wide as he looked at Nightflight oddly. Mistyeyes's eyes were soft, though, and a small smile played on the edges of her mouth as she turned back towards the edge of the cliff. "We speak the truth." She said softly, not having to raise her voice to be heard in the quietness of the cavern. "It is up to you whether or not you listen to our words. But if you're willing to change along with the humans, I feel as if we could learn much from them. And they could learn much from us."

"â€¦We've gone so long without the humans." A voice said, tone quiet.

"It'll be a big change. And a hard one." Mistyeyes urged. "But like we said, it'll be worth it in the end. Nightflight made her own drastic change, and she was the one against humans in the first place." Nightflight blinked, ducking her head and letting a saddened frown cloud over her face. "You looked up to her when she was preaching against humans, can you not see how much she's changed now? If anything, you should listen to her more now, just because she did undergo such a huge shift." The dragon hesitated, trying to find words to go off of. "Like I said, it is a big change. â€¦If you have questions, we can answer them for you, easily."

Hiccup blinked, looking out over the crowd expectantly. He expected there to be silence; after all, most dragons here didn't seem to want to stand out, now that he thought back to it. But surprisingly,

Fleetfoot stood up, the boy recognizing him as his old wounds throbbed underneath his tunic. But the dragon only looked confused, not scornful or rude. "How are we supposed to show the humans that we've changed?" He demanded, turning so that his gaze was fixed on Nightflight, who was slowly becoming more and more upset, it seemed. "It's not like we can talk them through all of what happened."

The question was obviously meant for Nightflight as he stared at her fixedly. But Mistyeyes brightened, knowing the answer and sweeping into her speech before Nightflight could even realize that the words were for her in the first place. "You may have noticed that Hiccup can understand dragons." She said, turning and flashing a smile in his direction. Hiccup felt a wave of heat as the dragons turned to look at him, becoming excited at this as they started to whisper about his performance in the fight that had been almost an hour ago. Hiccup smiled nervously at their stares, becoming warm as he shifted from foot to foot on the slippery surface of the ledge. Ludi shrank underneath the weight of the looks, swelling up and trying to look bigger than she actually was.

"You mean the female doesn't?" Fleetfoot asked flatly, looking critically at Astrid. "What's she doing here, then?"

Astrid stiffened as the dragon look at her.

Mistyeyes only flicked her ear dismissively. "This girl is a resident of Berk. She'd come with us here because she held trust in us. Hiccup had explained to her in detail what had happened between the Night Furies and Berk, and she was so moved by it that she decided she would come out and help us in any way she could." She broke off for a moment, glancing at the pair of them gratefully. "Hiccup is going to do as much as it takes to spread the word about how Night Furies are changing their ways, and Astrid will help by showing people that what he says is true, and that she was swayed for a reason. With the two of them helping us, there's no way that we could even hold a doubt of not having the humans forgive us. But- of course, we'd have to forgive them as well."

"But they've killed off members of our ranks!" Talon objected.

Toothless saved Mistyeyes the heartache in replying. "How many humans have you all killed?"

The others became quiet once more at this, ducking their heads at the question and refusing to reply. Mistyeyes spoke up once more, bracingly by now. "The humans won against you all during the last Raid, isn't that right? It's because they're stronger than you all." The dragons bristled at this, but Mistyeyes only grew more assertive in her words. "Don't deny the fact, because it's there. A bunch of humans won over you all, and there's a good reason for that. It's because they are in fact stronger, much as you would hate to admit it. You can either embrace the fact and try to add yourself into the ranksâ€¦or you can ignore them and eventually be overcome anyway." She flicked her tail. "Your choice."

Nightflight's shoulders hunched suddenly, the dragoness getting to her feet and turning swiftly. Bunching her muscles tightly, the dragon sprang off from the perch, landing on the cave ground rather neatly as she hurried away. Hiccup turned and watched with a

concerned look as she disappeared into one of the branching tunnels, disappearing from sight at once. He opened his mouth to say something, but Toothless beat him to it. The Night Fury weaved around Mistyeyes and Shadowclaw to lean down beside the human's ear. "I'll go after her." He hissed, not giving Hiccup a moment to object as he followed the dragon off of the ledge.

Hitting the ground running, Toothless chose the tunnel that Nightflight had vanished into, footsteps gradually fading away as he chased after her. Astrid watched the exchange with a narrowed look, the girl turning over to look at Hiccup in confusion. "What was with that?" She asked softly, crossing her arms over her chest as she let a hint of worry come over her. "You don't think that Nightflight is regretting the choice of being with us?" She asked suddenly. "Not after all she's done so farâ€¦right?" She looked over to Hiccup, who was still staring after the two dragons, as if waiting for them to come right back.

"â€¦I don't know." Hiccup rasped, suddenly looking immensely worried.

Everything had seemed so laid out. Nightflight had shown herself a member of Berk now, even if she wasn't officially accepted. At all. But her words seemed to cast a huge influence across those of the other dragons, and accompanied with Mistyeyes's explanations, it looked as if the Night Furies were seriously considering a future alongside humans. The evidence was displayed, as well as the truth of the matter what with the fight that Hiccup and Nightflight had gone through. The boy was just getting ready to start leaping for joy. After all, they'd managed to sway the dragon this much without _too _much trouble.

But was Nightflight's words all a lie? What was she doing now?

Standing emptily on the ledge beside Astrid, Hiccup suddenly felt himself grow numb as he pictured his entire plan slowly falling apart at the seams.

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Toothless's breath came in puffs as he rushed after Nightflight, green eyes searching the darkness of the cave around him as he searched for her black form. Though he'd grown up in this place, the network of tunnels and passageways were enough to send him reeling. He was more than sure that he would probably get lost coming in here, and that would certainly be embarrassing. Maybe he should have put more thought into this before charging into a tunnel that lead to who-knows-where after a dragon that was doing who-knows-what. Butâ€¦|

He'd forgotten his reason for doing it in the first place.

Maybe it was because Nightflight looked so upset when she'd left. And she'd gone so abruptly, he had no idea what could be on her mind. He'd rushed after her too quickly, though, and that left him running through tunnel after tunnel, trying to remember where he'd been but ultimately forgetting it ten seconds later. He had no idea how confused a living space could get, but the farther he went, the more lost he started to feel. He was so used to having big open spaces on

Berk to run around in, and the constricting walls of the cave were starting to get him on-edge. There was a nervous twitch running up and down his scales, and he couldn't deny the sick feeling he got when the walls started to press in on his shoulders.

But gradually, the walls started to get wider once more, allowing him space to breathe and room to actually stand and walk instead of pushing his weight forward painfully. It was hard to imagine himself living in a place like this after experiencing Berk, which was a good thing in its own right. After all: maybe the other Night Furies would follow the example he showed. Maybe in the near future, they too would forget the network of their tunnels, only knowing the forests and lush grass of Berk instead. He had to admit, it was an improvement from this place. Which it could look breathtaking at times, most of the time it just seemed too big. Too spacious and way too cold for life to kindle itself inside its freezing clutches.

Movement caught his eye up ahead, and he straightened suddenly, turning around and veering towards the form. The room that he had found himself inside was particularly appealing, or as close as this place got, he thought bitterly. There was a round hole in the cave roof, letting in the moonshine and letting it stream down into a large pool on the ground. The white light cast long shadows down to the cave, framing the stalactites and stalagmites in a pretty glow. Droplets of water that dripped down to the ground sparkled like little stars, the moon lighting their way as they dripped into the ground with a soft plop of impact. The sight was enough to actually put the rest of the cave in a better light.

Nightflight sat in the middle of the moonlight puddle, ears close to her head as she stared unseeingly at the ground. Toothless slowed as he got closer, not wanting to startle her by his sudden appearance. But the female's ears perked at the sound of his footsteps, shoulders hunching over even more as she closed her eyes. "Toothless?" She asked, voice riddled with thick sadness.

Struck by the amount of anguish in her voice, Toothless cleared his throat. "Yeah." He said softly, voice echoing in the large space of the cave and bouncing off its stone walls. Hesitating for a moment, the dragon turned over and sat down beside her, narrowing his eyes and looking up towards the moon. The night was cloudless, a million little dots of white surrounding the large sphere of the moon as stars clustered themselves together, straining to see into the little hole towards the cave. Tearing his gaze away from the night sky, Toothless leaned forward, looking at Nightflight with concern. "Are you alright?" He asked, starting with the obvious.

Nightflight twitched her tail, answering his questions without words. Instead, she raised her snout into the air, blinded eyes straining suddenly, as if she were trying to see through the blackness crowding her vision. "Does it look as pretty as I remember?" She asked, voice choked as she ducked her head once more in defeat. She screwed her eyes shut tightly, tail curling with disappointment as she couldn't seem to see through her shroud. Toothless blinked, ears flattening to his head sadly as a pang of pity shook him to the core.

"It's very pretty." He managed.

"I thought so." Nightflight whispered, giving a small nod.

The two fell into an uncomfortable silence, and Nightflight gave a regretful sigh. "I miss it."

Toothless perked, tilting his head to the side. "Seeing?" He asked.

"No." Nightflight choked. She turned over to him, looking strained. "I miss the old days." She managed. "Before any of this ever happened. Before—before I went and ruined everything." Toothless blinked, the statement surprising him as he grew quiet. "I miss the times when we didn't have to force ourselves to be with one another." She blew out a shaky huff of air. "I doubt you remember them though." She closed her eyes, grimacing deeply as she spat out: "I bet you try to forget as much as you can when it comes to me."

Toothless looked at her with wide eyes, feeling somewhat numb as he stared brokenly at her. For a moment, he was swept away from his body, flashing back to the times that Nightflight spoke of. The sunny days where he would wake up and immediately charge over to Nightflight's nest, leaning over her anxiously and prodding her with a claw. 'Wake up, fluff-brain!' He would cheer, Nightflight's shining green orbs snapping open to clash with his own. A delighted expression would overcome the female's face as she shot to her feet, and he would always feel that certain amount of excitement that he always did around her. 'We've got important adventures to do today! You can't be asleep all morning!'

The stars always seemed to shine brighter back then. The world seemed a bit bigger. And his shoulders weren't so strained with worry. They had both been so carefree in those times; their only worry was when they couldn't play together, and how long they'd have to go without one another's company. When had things gotten so messed up? When had everything shattered into little fragments, much too small for someone to pick up and piece back together? Had it been something he had done? Or something she did? Or was just something that couldn't be avoided?

"—I still remember." He whispered softly, voice muted.

"But it doesn't make a difference, does it?" Nightflight asked, not looking at him. "It can never be the same, can it?"

Against his better judgment, Toothless shook his head. "No. I guess not." He said.

Nightflight hesitated before asking her next question. She turned towards him, clouded eyes rounded out with grief and sadness. "And it'll never work either, will it?" She managed in a high whisper. "—Us?"

Toothless froze at the notion, looking at Nightflight with wide eyes. Her own words echoed back in his head, an unending mantra that repeated itself over and over in his mind: 'I love you, Toothless. I always have.' He'd repeated the statement to her back then, returning the affections for her right outside this very cave. He'd seen the way her eyes had sparkled to life at the agreement, or the way she seemed to float a million feet above the clouds afterwards. He'd give anything to see her that way again, and he knew that he couldn't if he

just said that words back to her. But that had been a different dragon back then who'd returned the affections. It hadn't really been him.

Did he love her, too?

Taking in a slow breath, Toothless closed his eyes, picturing all of the time he'd shared with Nightflight. The long afternoons spent talking and laughing together back in the caves, the way that they started talking together even now. He listed all the things he knew about her: the way she puffed up when she got angry, the way she often stubbornly refused any means of help, the way that she tackled her blindness head-on and sacrificed herself anyway, her quick-thing and, albeit rare, charm. He pictured her joyous smile that could sometimes find its way over her face, her voice turning into a sound closely resembling a tone close to bells whenever she was laughing, her shimmering blue eyes

Toothless snapped to attention at once, twisting himself out of the thoughts at once as he looked over at Nightflight. She didn't have blue eyes, Mistyeyes had blue eyes. Nightflight's eyes were green. And yet Toothless found himself unconsciously slipping back into his thoughts as he looked bleakly at the female in front of him. He was torn, it look like. The shining question that he had been avoiding for so long was now sitting right in front of his feet, waiting to be answered:

Mistyeyes or Nightflight?

Nightflight had known him from birth. She knew every little thing about Toothless, and he knew most things about her. They could a lifetime reminiscing about the old days they had together, and they could get lost in their memories of sun-baked days and moonlit nights. They shared a past so strong and long that it was almost daunting and yet they had a tragic one as well. Amid the happy smiles and trilling laughter, there was a dark and scarred area. This is the dragon that turned him against Hiccup, and this is the dragon that nearly wiped out Berk. Throughout their memories, there were scars there as well. Deep, penetrating gashes that left ugly blemishes across the sunny smiles and games they once played.

Mistyeyes was another story. She was still a mystery to him, the female sometimes going out of her way to surprise the dragon, it seemed. He knew much less about her than he did Nightflight, and the two of them certainly had their shares of long ((pointless)) arguments. Mistyeyes had gone against her father and the whole of her Pack, who had once called her a Leader, to be the first dragon to make a change. From the start, she was set and ready to do anything in order to save not just herself, but the whole of the Night Furies. She had witnessed the magic of Berk and immediately wished to prove herself to its legacy. She'd seen Hiccup, and she immediately grew a hard edge towards protecting him. She was quick to think of others, and she even held an air of power that most dragons in Berk actually paid attention to.

She was strong and confident, ready and willing to do anything and everything to help a cause that sometimes wasn't even her own. She was everything that Toothless often wished himself to be, and he oftentimes found himself looking towards her. She had a quick brain

and fast-paced thoughts; she could twist herself out of any knot, and yet she had humility at the same time. Though a mystery to him, she was another kind of mystery: one that he wanted to sit down with and figure out. He'd watched her go from subdued, powerful, sorrowful, distracted, happy, overjoyed, beaming, and excited. The two of them had seen through this situation most of the time side-by-side, now that he thought of it. They'd witnessed loss, success, tragedy, and happiness together.

And somehow, when he tried to force himself to think of Nightflight, her shimmering blue eyes always burned through his mind.

"â€¦Iâ€¦" Toothless searched for words, green eyes round as he struggled inwardly.

"It's Mistyeyes, isn't it?" Nightflight sighed.

"â€¦I think so." Toothless murmured, eyes softening as he looked down at the ground. He repeated his words, much more sure of himself by now. "Yeah. I'm sure of it."

"I understand." She said simply, voice breaking as she got to her feet.

"I'm sorry." Toothless managed, pushing himself up again as he maneuvered to stand in front of her. "You were my friend once, and seeing you soâ€¦" He trailed off, heart breaking. "â€¦I realize now that I don't want you to be upset. I can't help you with what you're thinking right now, and I don't think I ever will beâ€¦but I don't want you to be upset." He hesitated a moment before bushing forward, unfurling his wing and placing it gently on the female's back. "â€¦if you'll let me, I think I'd like to try being friends again. Maybe we can't have anything too seriousâ€¦but we can have the old days back."

"Can we?" Nightflight asked hollowly.

"Maybe not the same as when we were younglings." Toothless amended. "But I've seen the way you've changed. And I take back what I've said before. You've shown that you really do care about our causeâ€¦and that you're willing to prove yourself even farther by returning to Berk. I do trust you, Nightflight. And I hope that you can trust me even if I don't feel the same way about you."

Nightflight sighed softly. "I can't blame you." She whispered. "Mistyeyes is lucky."

Toothless became quiet at this. Silence filled the cavern, and he leaned forward, trying to decipher the female's expression. Her face resembled someone who's chest had just been ripped open, and feeling his gaze boring into her, she looked away. "Are you okay?" Toothless pressed, knowing that he wouldn't be helping the situation at all by talking more. The female winced at his concerned tone, letting out a small sigh as she turned her back to him.

"I just want to be alone." She said simply. "It's why I came here in the first place."

"Being alone doesn't help things." Toothless tried weakly.

"Apparently neither does being with others." She choked out.

Grimacing, and realizing that he couldn't help at all right now, Toothless dipped his head. "Okay, Nightflight, I'll leave you alone." He said softly, turning around and starting back the way he'd come. "Hiccup'll be worried." He said, pausing as he looked over his shoulder. "Come back soon, alright?" Nightflight didn't reply to him, closing her eyes tightly and pretending as if the words hadn't reached her ears. Giving another regretful sigh, Toothless looked at her carefully for a moment, trying to remember what this broken, blinded dragon used to be. But he came up with nothing.

"I'm sorry." He said.

And once again, she ignored him.

Turning around, Toothless retraced his steps, feeling as though he was being ripped apart with each step he took. He knew that he had made the right choice in choosing Mistyeyes, that much was for certain. But he had no idea of what the consequences would be from this one predicament. Big or little, the blow of his decision left himself feeling as if he were disconnected with the rest of his body, his head swimming more and more as he slipped through tunnel after confusing tunnel.

And no matter how many times he assured himself that he did the right thing, he couldn't help but feel as if he had left half of his heart back in the starlit tunnel, and that he most certainly would never get it back.

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A/N: **I can say it, but you won't believe me.**

You say you do, but you don't deceive me.

It's hard to know they're out there; it's hard to know that you still care.

I can say it but you won't believe me.

You say you do, but you don't deceive me.

Dead hearts are everywhereâ€|dead hearts are everywhereâ€|

**Dead Hearts - Stars **

**IMPORTANT: **Since I don't have school over Summer, there is no limit on my updates. I can update twice a week, three times a week, whatever works. I just update whenever I feel like I've gained enough reviews for the last chapter. So I basically just go off reviews during Summer, there's no real pattern to it like I try to keep up during school.

FINALLY WE SOLVE THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION!

Mistyeyes would like to thank the Academy ;3

Nightflight would like to KILL the Academy.

I've found myself liking Nightflight more and more the more I write her, she's probably my favorite person in this story. But it just wouldn't make sense for them two to end up together, even I have to admit that. And I like Mistyeyes: she's interesting, and she's still got a few shades in her persona that I haven't even touched at yet.

Which is why I'm still thinking of doing a separate story after this going into more detail about their past XDDD What do you all think? Leave a review being specific, but I also have a NEW poll to go and vote on, if you please :D

49. Chapter 49

A/N: Guys. I am being completely serious with you right now, okay? Serious face and everything. If I EVER manage to get 1,000 reviews for this storyâ€¦I will just freak out. I'm being legit right now, seriously. If I EVER reach a number like thatâ€¦there are just no words. I joined this site two summers ago because I was bored and I wanted something to do. I NEVER imagined that I would become NEARLY this popular. So thank you for all the reviews and loving support that you guys give me all the time. I've probably said it before, but I don't think I've said it nearly enough just yet. :)

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The meeting broke up a little while after Toothless had left. It wasn't an official ending, but as more and more surefire answers came from the group that had come from Berk, the more and more quiet the other dragons seemed to get. Faces were still conflicted as they stared up at the group, and anxious whispers still rippled over the crowd even as Mistyeyes and Hiccup answered every single question that was handed their way. But the aggression that had once fueled the group seemed to be smothered the longer that the pair talked over things. Or, at least the flame of their anger was starting to flicker with uncertainty. But as Mistyeyes stood against the light of the moon high in the sky, she realized that it was better than nothing. They had all come here to try and enforce some kind of shift in life, and they were gradually creating that change that they had been going for.

A silence was slowly bridging itself across the crowd, and Mistyeyes realized that now might be a good time to stop. She hadn't intended for this meeting to stretch this long in the first place; overloading the dragons with too much information might be putting too much pressure on them, and at the same time, it might make them even less quick to make a decision about joining Berk. Clearing her throat a little louder than she intended, Mistyeyes gave an inward wince before speaking again. "I realize that this may be a lot for you to take in right now, and I understand." She said with a dip of her head. "And it's getting late." She hesitated a moment before adding. "We all can stay here overnight, and if you have any more questions that come to mind later, you can feel free to voice them."

"Stay overnight?" Fleetfoot repeated, getting to his feet as he eyed the group a little distastefully. Mistyeyes felt a flash of

disappointment at the movement; she was just beginning to feel as though Fleetfoot was starting to change his mindset about the humans. But the Night Fury seemed a little jarred by the last statement. Mistyeyes opened her mouth to reply, but he cut her off before she could. "Where are you going to stay?" He hesitated a moment before adding on: "Where are the _humans _going to stay?" Other dragons seemed to find the conflict interesting themselves, a few inquisitive glances sent their way.

Mistyeyes swallowed back her frustration before replying. "They're going to stay with us, of course." She said politely, managing to give the harebrained Night Fury a small grin. "If you'd like us to stay somewhere else though, we could go back to where we landed and rest there for the night. I just thought that you would rather have us here if you had any more questions." Fleetfoot blinked at this, withdrawing a little sourly as his tail flicked a little uncertainly.

One dragon glared over in Fleetfoot's direction. "Let them stay! I have a few more questions!"

"Then go after them." Frost growled in a grouchy tone. "_I _certainly don't want them here."

"That's just because you can't admit a human did better than you. They can stay." Leafdapple snapped.

Frost flared at once, eyes blazing as he rounded on the younger one. "Say that again." He snarled.

Shadowclaw stiffened where he sat, shooting to his feet at once as he made a move to dash forward. Hiccup jerked at the sudden movement, leaning over and barring the Night Fury's way with his arm. Furious, Shadowclaw rounded on the human, looking as though he had a few sharp words that he wanted to lash out with. But Hiccup raised his eyebrows sternly, fixing the dragon with a look that plainly said: 'Don't ruin this.' Scowling with irritation, Shadowclaw's eyes flashed down to Leafdapple once more before slamming back down to a sitting position. He fumed bad-temperedly, and Ludi let out a cross mew at his temper, clapping her paws against Hiccup's chest like it was a drum.

Talon stepped forward quickly, thrusting himself between Frost and Leafdapple as he shot both of the dragons angered looks. "Listen up!" He yowled, Leafdapple looking relieved as she stepped backwards behind her rescuer. "The newcomers can stay by the entrance of the cave." Talon ordered firmly, leaving no room for argument as he swept his tail over in the direction of the yawning exit. "They'll be in plain sight, so they won't be able to try anything, and for those of you who still want to talk to them, you'll be free to do so." He turned, turning a cold look over at Frost, who twitched angrily. "And if you don't want to associate with them, then you have the full right to leave them alone."

Frost gave an angered growl, whipping around and stomping into one of the tunnels that branched off to the side, disappearing with a lash of his tail. After a moment of hesitation, Fleetfoot got to his feet and headed after the disgruntled dragon, not even glancing over at Mistyeyes as he brushed by. The female let out a small sigh, deflating visibly as the pair vanished into the darkness. Her ears flicked back and forth as she watched them go, shoulders hunching at

the thought of failure flashed through her head. But a quiet cough from below started her back into reality.

Leafdapple had recovered from her sudden advancement from Frost, getting up to her feet and narrowing her eyes as she looked up at the group curiously. "Will you show us more tomorrow?" She asked softly, tilting her head to the side as she asked the odd question. Mistyeyes blinked rapidly at this, caught off-guard as she blanched, but a slow smile crept over Shadowclaw's face as he looked excitedly down at the slender female. Guessing that her request was far from specific, she backtracked quickly. "I mean- more about what humans and dragons can help one another with. I don't know what you would doâ€¦butâ€¦it just seemed really interesting to me." The brown dragon shuffled her paws anxiously as she talked in front of the entire Pack, but Mistyeyes caught the looks of interest and excitement reflecting across the crowd as the question was brought up.

"Ohâ€¦" Mistyeyes trailed off, blinking rapidly. What else could they do?

But to her surprise, Hiccup weaved forward to stand in front of her, green eyes shining, as if he had just reached some sort of clever idea. "Of course we can!" He said assuredly, suddenly very confident in standing in front of the large group of Night Furies as he spoke up for the first time. Astrid looked at him oddly, blue eyes narrowed as she gave him a look that said: 'Are you always this stupid, or do you just want to be sometimes?' But he seemed unbothered by the fact, going on and not letting either of the females stop him. "We can show you more things tomorrow at noon." He paused a moment, wincing as he tried to remember the layout of the island. Taking where they had landed in the first place, Hiccup gave a small nod. "Over by the northern edge of the island."

Leafdapple seemed surprised to get a reply out of the human, but didn't say anything. She merely gave a hesitant nod at this, mumbling out a shy thank-you, as if she didn't know what else she was supposed to say. The promise of tomorrow hung in the air now, the questions going silent as dragons slowly came to the resolve that they would find out more tomorrow. Trading awkward glances back and forth, the pressing weight of silence slowly became thick with awkward tension.

Deciding that she'd done enough damage for the moment (aided of course by the always-helpful intrusions of Hiccup) Mistyeyes stepped forward with yet another respectful dip of the head. "Alright." She said, shooting Hiccup a look as she shoved him back rather rudely to where he had been standing prior to his interruption. Hiccup let out a sharp yelp as he was knocked into Astrid, but Mistyeyes just turned back to the crowd swiftly. "It's getting late, and I understand that we might be piling a lot on at the moment. Soâ€¦ I suppose that if you have any questions, you all know where to find us."

Before the words were out of her mouth, conversations exploded down below, Night Furies whirling around to their companions and immediately launching into conversation. Mistyeyes caught a few snatches of words from where she was perched, all talking about the fight that happened earlier, the way that Fleetfoot and Frost had left so suddenly, or what tomorrow would bring. The female sat back after a moment or two, thanking heaven that at least nobody was talking _bad _about them.

But after a few heartbeats, the relief quickly mutated into anger. She turned around to face Hiccup, the boy busy talking to Astrid and going over what had just happened. The girl was wide-eyed with surprise as Hiccup relayed the events, and she looked like she was a little overwhelmed with having to absorb it all at once. Pushing away her concern for the blonde for once, Mistyeyes pushed her way forward so that she loomed over the boy angrily. She reached out, holding back no force as she rammed her foot into the small of the child's back. Immediately, she shoved Hiccup forward, the boy tripping over himself as he rammed into the cave wall with a dull thud.

Astrid turned and watched, but did not interfere. She merely crossed her arms over her chest, watching the scene with unbridled amusement as Hiccup pried himself off the rock. Mistyeyes fixed him with blazing glare, waiting expectantly just so she could interrupt him. Sure enough, right when Hiccup opened his mouth to ask what the shove was for, Mistyeyes broke into it at once, exploding like a fireball. "What were you thinking?" She demanded furiously. "You can't just cut in like that! The dragons down there have never associated themselves with humans before! We can't overload them!"

"I'm not overloading them!" Hiccup hissed in response, gaining some of his own resentment as he glared at her sourly. He rubbed at his arm which he had scraped against the stone, giving a small wince at the touch. "Believe it or not, Mistyeyes, they're going to have to come into contact with humans more now that we're trying to get them to do things like this!" Mistyeyes soured at this, unable to find a reasonable argument to this as she went quiet. "The more we make them work with it, the more we get them accustomed to it." Hiccup said, voice quieting somewhat. "It'll be fine, Mistyeyes. Tomorrow, I can show them how me and Toothless fly together despite the way his tailfin isn't able to move by itself."

"You haven't flown with Toothless for a while." Astrid commented softly.

Hiccup straightened at this, turning around and looking over at her suddenly. "What?"

"I mean- you haven't really flown with him to work on tricks for a long time." Astrid said slowly, walking the boy through it as she raised her eyebrows. Hiccup went quiet at this, looking down thoughtfully as she went on. "I'm not saying you won't be able to do it, I'm sure you will. But I think you should at least try to run through it a few times or something before tomorrow. If you mess up even a little bit, this whole thing could blow up in your face, you know that right?" When Hiccup shot her an angered look, she raised her hands up in surrender. "Just saying. No pressure or anything."

Mistyeyes took in a slow breath, forcing herself to ignore Astrid's words and calm down. "It'll be fine." She said after she made herself calm down. "You'll be fine. Everything is going to be fine." While the words were meant to be encouraging, her tone obviously sent out: 'It'd better be fine, otherwise I'll have to kill one of you.' Hiccup and Astrid looked at her wearily, looking as if they would have rather started to back away from her. But her frustration was shattered into pieces as a sudden voice called up to them from down on the cave floor.

"Mistyeyes!" The female stiffened immediately as she recognized the voice, wincing visibly. Shadowclaw did the exact opposite from her though, lighting up at once as he looked down. Not waiting for the others, the younger dragon swooped down to Talon, who had been the one to call out in the first place. Streaming down with an elegant swoop, he landed in front of the elder with a wide beam. Immediately, Talon seemed to recognize him as his eyes lit up. "That can't be Shadowclaw, can it?" He asked rhetorically, tail curling as he leaned down to nudge the smaller one with his snout. Shadowclaw giggled at this, taking a step backwards as he gave a purr. "You've grown a lot since I last saw you." Talon said. "When you were here last, you were no bigger than my paw! Now you're almost up to my shoulder!"

"It's good to see you again, Talon." Shadowclaw replied politely.

Mistyeyes craned her neck, making a face as she peered down at the pair. Hiccup went up to her, green eyes a little troubled as he looked over at her. "What's the matter?" He whispered, careful not to raise his voice. Talon was still talking to Shadowclaw, and by the looks of it, Mistyeyes didn't want to be noticed at the moment. Even if the yearning was for nothing; she'd just finished preaching to the whole of the island's population. That wasn't really keeping a 'down-low' in Hiccup's opinion. Looking down at the dragon that Mistyeyes seemed to oppose, Hiccup had to wonder what he could have done to cause such a hatred in the female. He seemed really nice. "Who is he?"

"My father." Mistyeyes sighed softly, emotion suddenly thawing away to fill with remorse.

"â€|Oh." Hiccup said, shoulders drooping as he looked back down at Talon. "I get it." He whispered, clenching his hands together tightly. "Did he say something to you last time you were together?" He asked numbly, tearing his gaze away from the dragon as he looked back over to Mistyeyes. "Something that made you leave on a bad note?"

"No." Mistyeyes said ruefully. "I did."

Hiccup blinked with surprise.

"And I guess I have to go back and fix things now." Mistyeyes said suddenly, turning around and giving Hiccup a long look for a few heartbeats. The boy was looking at her emptily, and the dragon suddenly felt a strong wave of pity for the boy. Giving a small sigh, the female smiled as she paced forward. Reaching over, she drew Hiccup closer with her paw, pressing him close to her as she nuzzled him with her head. "Hey- I'm sorry." She said as she drew backwards from the surprised boy. "I really shouldn't let myself get so worked up over things. I should know by now that you know what you're doing."

The boy grinned weakly. "Some of the times." He teased.

Mistyeyes hummed out a small giggle. "Well- I believe in you." She said warmly. Glancing over at Astrid, she gave a small nod of affirmation. "We all do. Soâ€| don't worry about it too much. We'll be able to fix things, one way or another." Suddenly, she frowned,

looking back down at Talon with a hint of frustration. "I guess I should listen to my own advice and fix this aspect." She said, flashing a small smile over to Hiccup.

"Mistyeyes!" Talon called yet again.

She did her best to flash Hiccup a small smile. "I'll be back." She said curtly, turning around and spreading her wings out at her sides. She pushed off the rock and glided down to the stone floor gently. Hiccup and Astrid looked after her, taking to sitting down on the ledge and staying up there for a while by themselves. As Mistyeyes landed on the smooth floor and glanced back up at them, her eyes softened. Astrid had leaned against Hiccup with an exhausted huff of air, resting her head on his shoulder as the boy started over in his explanation of the meeting. Ludi slipped off from Hiccup's shoulder to plop down in his lap, a heap of silvery fluff.

"They're actually really amazing." The statement came from Mistyeyes's father, the dragoness looking back over at him to see him staring up at the pair. Looking back down and meeting his daughter's eyes, the dragon shuffled a little awkwardly. "I never would have thought that a human could amount much to anything." He went on. "But that boy actually proved himself a worthy asset in that fight."

"Humans aren't just assets." Mistyeyes said, voice sharper than she meant it to be. "They're our friends. That's all we've come here to try and convey."

Talon opened his mouth to say something, but thought better of it as he shook his head. Instead, he looked at her a little longer, stare burning through the female's scales as he studied her carefully. When he spoke next, his voice sounded much more strained and tired, as if everything that had happened between them just came into focus. As if he hadn't been kept awake from it like Mistyeyes had. "I was starting to wonder when you would stop avoiding me." He said lowly, voice riddled with regret and sadness as he looked at the female in front of him. The bright eyes that used to shine up at him gleefully were now toned down with responsibility and stress. The happy flitter in the girl's wings had now been replaced with a stiff posture of run-down authority. There was no warmth in the female's presence. Only that of a person who was trying much too hard to put something back together.

"I wasn't avoiding you." Mistyeyes said slowly, forcing the words out as best she could. "I never did. I just had to find a way to go with the other Night Furies." She shuffled her paws on the stone, the sound amplified as she gave a small flinch at the volume. "It was the best way of going out and stopping things before it could get even worse than it was already. I had to get out there, and you know I did. The only way to make sure that you'd let me go was to say all those things."

Talon continued to stare at her long and hard. "You didn't have to go out there and fix it all." He said, stating the obvious. "Why would you? These are the same Night Furies that abandoned you all those months ago. They'd already let you down, why did you feel the need to get involved?" He paused a moment, controlling himself before searching his daughter's gaze anxiously. "You ran off to save a group of dragons that despised any notion of help; even more so when it

came from you."

Mistyeyes drew herself up at once, eyes flashing. "If I didn't, who would have?" She demanded firmly.

Talon still refused to let her off easily. "You could have just told me." He said quietly.

"Nightflight wouldn't let me go along until she thought I truly hated it here." Mistyeyes mumbled uncomfortably.

But instead of getting more angry like the dragon expected him to, Talon looked like a plug had just been pulled from him, his worries flooding away at once as he sagged with relief. Looking at the female closely, his voice was subdued as he asked: "So you didn't mean what you said?" Speechless, Mistyeyes looked away, ears flattening to her head as she shook her head guiltily.

"I know that it was uncalled for, and I probably should have figured out something else to--"

Talon rushed forward immediately, cutting her off as he swept down to press his head tenderly against her own. Mistyeyes froze at the touch, eyes wide as she stared down at the ground between her claws. "I'm just happy you're okay." He breathed out finally, saying the statement that had been hanging in between them like a string. Hesitantly, Mistyeyes un-tucked herself from the elder, looking up and blinking slowly as she met his gaze. Talon started at the look on her face, tilting his head and letting concern wash over his features. "You are okay, right?" He asked at once.

Mistyeyes hesitated a moment before dipping her head, smiling as she let a smile grace her features. "Yes." She said gratefully, tail curling neatly around her paws. She turned, looking up and Astrid and Hiccup. The blonde looked as though she was telling a joke, or at least attempting to tell one. Hiccup made a face at her, turning around and nudging her affectionately as he gave a short laugh. Astrid stuck her tongue out at him, but merely settled herself right back into her comfortable perch as she rested herself against the Viking once more.

Off to the side, Shadowclaw had broken away from his usual group, tail sticking up into the air with surprise and delight suddenly as he quickened his pace. Leafdapple perked at the sight of him, eyes lighting up at once as the male skidded to a halt by her side. Ever the one to strike up a conversation first, Shadowclaw started babbling the minute he came to a stop. But Leafdapple didn't seem to mind, the female matching his excitement stride for stride as she listened to him eagerly.

"I thinkâ€|for the first time in a long timeâ€|we're all going to be just fine."

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

"Leafdapple!" The female straightened at the call of her name, turning around swiftly and looking back towards the voice. Shadowclaw rushed up to her, grinning widely as he came to an unsteady halt in front of her. He skidded in the process, nearly tripping over himself. Quickly, Leafdapple leaned forward, catching him expertly

and helping him to right himself before giggling out a return of 'hello.'

"Hi, Shadowclaw." She purred, green eyes soft with amusement. "I was starting to wonder when you would come back and say hello." She paused a moment before looking at him curiously. "Did you know that Hiccup and Nightflight could fight together like that? I didn't see them during the Raid when we last met, we really could have used them."

Shadowclaw flicked his ears with a small hint of disappointment. "Yeah, I guess." He mumbled shortly, not wanting to dwell too much on the whole 'Joining-Berk' thing. He'd come over here to see Leafdapple again; he wanted a break from all the hostility and change. "Hey, I have an idea!" He said eagerly, surprising Leafdapple as she quieted at once. He reached over, prodding the girl with one claw as he hopped up to his feet. "Let's go out flying!" He suggested happily. "I haven't been out to fly, just toâ€¦fly, you know? Not for a while."

Leafdapple glanced over her shoulder, blinking as she peered down the tunnel she had been heading down before Shadowclaw had stopped her. "Ohâ€¦" She mumbled, turning back to him and looking somewhat torn. "I was just going to go back to my nest." She explained a little awkwardly. "It's been a long day, and I kinda wanna just go back down to the others and rest for a little bit."

Shadowclaw blinked at this, eyes widening a fraction as his shoulder drooped low. Disappointment yawned in the pit of his stomach like a gash, and he ducked his head to try and hide his put-out expression. Lashing his tail back and forth, Shadowclaw wondered dimly whether or not Leafdapple still liked him as much as she had back before the Raid. She seemed to genuinely want to trust him before, so why was she avoiding him now? "Oh." He said, rather stupidly. "That's okay." He mumbled, starting to turn back the way he'd come. "I'll see you tomorrow, then." He said, trying to sound upbeat.

"See ya." Leafdapple said quietly, watching him go blankly.

Hesitating for a moment, Shadowclaw flicked his tail in farewell, turning around and retracing his steps. The cave was slowly clearing itself out now that dragons were going back to their own nests for the night. A few of the Night Furies were still out, glancing over at Mistyeyes with silent looks. It was obvious that some dragons still had a few questions as to the humans and dragons joining together. Shadowclaw had his own as well, such as the way that Leafdapple suddenly decided to be cold towards him. He gave a frustrated scowl, downcast as he plodded his way back over to Hiccup and Astrid.

But suddenly, something clamped down hard on his tail, jerking him backwards and causing him to slip. He face-planted into the stone floor, letting out a grunt as he picked himself up. Twisting his head around with a sour look, he blinked with surprise as Leafdapple looked back at him, expression riddled with amusement. She lifted her paw up from his tail, giving another high giggle as she bounced around him. "Sorry." She laughed lightly, helping the male to pick himself up for the second time that night. Taking a small step backwards, she poked him in the side good-naturedly. "You didn't think I was being serious, did you?" She asked skeptically. "I'm

quite offended right now."

"Wellâ€¦" Shadowclaw blanched, not having too good of an excuse. "Fine, maybe I did." He said quickly, dusting himself off as he shot her a teasing look. Leafdapple hummed out a reply, shuffling her paws as she became somewhat quiet. Flicking her tail back and forth, the girl looked at Shadowclaw expectantly, waiting for him to be the first to say something. Straightening at once, the male cleared his throat rapidly, shooting his wings out at his sides as he narrowed his eyes challengingly. "I bet I can get up in the air faster than you!" He crowed, taking off as soon as the words left his mouth.

Leafdapple started, whirling around and watching him go blankly as her brain buffered. But then she smirked, twisting around and sprinting after him to catch up. "Hey!" She gasped sharply, trying to match his stride as the male skirted around Mistyeyes rapidly. The gray dragon looked at them oddly as they rushed past her, but she made no move to stop them. "That's cheating!" Leafdapple yowled, letting her wings catch air as she streaked through the rest of the cave. She passed Shadowclaw up easily, the male letting out a squeak as she flashed by him.

"That's cheating too!" Shadowclaw protested, taking off on his own and making it so that he and Leafdapple were side-by-side.

"Yeah, well, I win." She said smugly, turning back and watching as the cave got farther and farther away from them. Screeching to a halt, the female took to a light hover in midair, Shadowclaw doing the same as the two gasped for air. "You're a good flier, though." Leafdapple said after she managed to catch a little bit of her breath back. "Do they fly a lot at Berk?"

"We used to do it more often." Shadowclaw said, remembering back to the time when the highlight of the day would be to go out and fly with Hiccup and Toothless. "For a few months it was really fun to live there, and I forgot about this place really fast, actually." He glanced back at the cave, gaze thoughtful. "I didn't really remember a lot from here since I was so little. And since I was small, when I got caught up in Berk's lifestyle, I just completely let it slip my mind."

"Then what happened?" The female asked.

"The Raids started coming." He sighed ruefully, watching a small hint of guilt entered his friend's mood. "Flying quickly became a lesser priority, and it came behind helping to rebuild the houses and pick up after everything. But the longer the Raids went on, the more our remodeling time started to diminish in between attacks. So flying pretty much went down to a pretty rare thing." Shaking himself, he added quickly: "I didn't mind it all that much. I liked helping out the humans and seeing my hard work pay off in the end, even if it was only for a short time."

"I guess humans and dragons really do work together." Leafdapple murmured softly.

"Well, yeah." Shadowclaw said plainly. "You saw us fighting together during the last Raid. I mean- even some of the Night Furies here worked with humans for at least a little bit of the time. I guess it

was just because it was in the thick of the moment and everything. But really, Berk is a cool place. I think if all these dragons get the embers out of their ears, they might be able to see that. Too bad they don't seem like the listening type sometimes."

Leafdapple gave a shrug, which was hard to do when you were hovering above the ground. "They learn more by action than anything, which you're doing fine at in my opinion. Night Furies have always been accustomed to stubbornness issues." She glanced over at him from the corner of her eye. "When I left Berk, I kind of went without knowing what I was going to do afterwards. I told you that I thought Berk was interestingâ€|but I just couldn't bring myself to stay for some reason. Maybe it was because it was such a sudden situation. I never really got to analyze things, you know? Butâ€| I feel like nowâ€|seeing what you can all really doâ€|I think I would change my mind."

"Really?" Shadowclaw asked, wings skipping a beat at the statement.

Leafdapple gave a little nod. "After all, life here isn't much to look at. We don't live here, we just survive, and there're two very different things. I feel like if we went with you, a lot of the problems would be solved that exist between dragons right now." She paused for a moment, flashing him a soft look. "And of course, I let you get away once. I'm not about to let you go again."

"Let _me _go?" Shadowclaw repeated. "_I _let _you _go." He said firmly.

Leafdapple chuckled, doing a little twist in midair as she started to break away from the cave vicinity. "Whatever!" She crowed happily, swerving away gracefully as she purred. She turned around, looking at him with a skeptical look before giving yet another laugh. "C'mon!" She called. "Let's see who can reach the other side of the island the quickest!"

Shadowclaw let the subject drop, grateful for the break as he took his place beside her for the starting line. "Ready?" Leafdapple asked softly, meeting his gaze as their eyes clashed.

"â€|Yeah." Shadowclaw said, looking at her closely. "I am, actually."

"Good." Leafdapple purred. "Setâ€|" Shadowclaw managed to look away from the female, crouching low and bracing his wings surely. "Go!" Leafdapple yowled, pushing ahead with a mighty zip as she flashed by the male. Shadowclaw gasped sharply, bursting after the female and charging after her as fast as he could.

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"Umâ€|Mistyeyesâ€|" The gray dragon started, turning around and looking over her shoulder. A Night Fury stood behind her anxiously, shuffling from foot to foot nervously as he eyed her. "Erâ€|I had a questionâ€|and I was wondering if you could answer it."

"Of course I can." Mistyeyes said, making a special point to sound upbeat as she turned around to face him. "What's on your mind?" She sat down neatly so that she could face him, wrapping her tail around

her paws and looking at the male curiously. The Night Fury twitched his ears back and forth nervously, taking a shallow breath, as if he were nervous about asking it. Opening his mouth, the dragon seemed to screw up the courage that he needed, when suddenly another voice vied for the female's attention.

"Mistyeyes!" Toothless was racing out of one of the tunnels, looking as if he'd just gotten lost in those caverns as he burst through. He looked tired and worn, but he raced up towards the female nonetheless. "Mistyeyes!" He repeated, coming to clumsy halt in front of her. "I haveâ€¦to talk to you." He gasped unevenly, Mistyeyes shooting the Night Fury in front of her an awkward smile as she shoved Toothless to the side. Talon looked dubiously at the movement, but said nothing as he got to his feet.

Glancing at Toothless, Talon swerved forward and intercepted himself between Mistyeyes and the Night Fury. "Here." He said, nudging the dragon away from the pair as he shot them both a look. Mistyeyes's eyes widened helplessly at the action, but Talon didn't seem too bothered with the new burden. However, the Night Fury looked slightly disappointed as he followed her father away a little reluctantly. "I can try and answer your question." Talon offered, the two marching away before the female could even try and call them back.

Watching them go for a moment, Mistyeyes flared at once as she rounded onto Toothless. "Toothless!" She screeched angrily, fuming as she dug her claws into the stone. "That dragon had a question! You can't go interrupting me whenever you feel like it! May I remind you that we're actually trying to do something here? You just-"

Toothless didn't listen to her, eyes a little wild as he leaned forward, clamping his teeth gently but firmly on Mistyeyes's left wing. The dragoness stiffened at the movement, but Toothless started dragging her at once, not giving her a moment to try and react to it. "Hey!" She squealed, wincing as Toothless hauled her over to the exit of the cave. Hiccup and Astrid perked at the odd scene below, watching with silent looks of interest as Mistyeyes was dragged out of the cavern. "Stop!" She spluttered angrily. "I-I can't-Toothless!" The two burst into the night air, breaking out of the cave as Toothless continued to juggle his load. "You are so insufferable! Can you not just _wait _a minute!"

Toothless continued to step backwards, but lost his footing suddenly. The dragon slipped, tightening his clamp on the female's wing with panic as Mistyeyes let out a sharp gasp. The two slipped right off the path that led up to the main cave, tumbling off the ledge and crashing down to the grass below. They landed with a heavy shock of impact, the breath whooshing out of Mistyeyes as she gaped like a fish out of water. Toothless regained his footing first, scrambling up to his feet and looking down at her wide eyes. "Mistyeyes!" He pressed. "I said I _need _to talk to you!"

Mistyeyes continued to gasp for air that wouldn't come to her, eyes wide as he looked at him silently, as if he were stupid. But he shook his head rapidly, not bothering to help her as he immediately launched into his spiel. "I know that you might not like me too much right now." He said, the girl still floundering comically for air. "And I know that you might not think that I do much for our cause, and I guess that's because I haven't really done much in the first

place. I've just been here whining and criticizing pretty much everybody."

Mistyeyes shot him a confused look.

"But I wanted I wanted to tell you that I'm willing to work with you on this more, and I hope you'll take it as a form of apology for you. Considering that I've kind of been pushing you away a lot these past few days. And I take full responsibility for it, I'll admit. But that's just because I was confused." He paused a moment, gasping sharply. "And the thing is I'm not confused anymore, you know?"

Finally, Mistyeyes took in a breath of oxygen. "What are you talking about?" She rasped, coughing.

Toothless snorted with embarrassed frustration. "I know we have a lot of our differences, and sometimes they're big differences. And we've had a lot of arguments about the stupidest things. And this whole thing had gotten in the way of everything because we're both fighting for our homes and we're really stressed out because we might not have homes by the end of this. But I wanted to let you know that I'm not worried about where things go from now because my home is wherever you are." Mistyeyes blinked rapidly, the dragon's words going so fast that they ended up slurred together and hard to make out. "Because whenever I'm with you you always know what to say, you always know what everyone needs, you always know how to go about it, you always know the most perfect way to word things, you know how to be a good friend-

Mistyeyes's eyes softened as he started to ramble.

"You're the best dragon I've ever known, and you're always going to be the best dragon I'll ever know, no matter what happens. I want to be with you, Mistyeyes. I want to finish this thing right by your side, and I want to make sure that we succeed, no matter how things turn out." He closed his eyes tightly, ducking his head. "I've been just a jerk to you, and I understand if you don't like me, since I've been such a fire-brain. But I just want to make it clear that I really like you, even if you don't like me. And I'm sorry for everything I've done to make you angry or sad, because whenever you're sad, I'm sad. And whenever you're happy, I'm happy. And whenever you're-

Mistyeyes dashed forward, cutting him off as she pressed her forehead tightly against his own. The male froze underneath the gesture, and after a few moments, Mistyeyes pulled back, blue eyes shining as the stars caught their glow. "You talk way too much." She whispered softly.

Toothless stared back at her, blanching a moment before he stuttered out: "So you aren't angry?"

"Angry?" Mistyeyes gasped, looking ready to burst. "I'm not even angry you nearly tore my wing off! Toothless to be with you!" She closed her eyes, purring loudly as she stepped forward and pressed herself warmly against him. "It's what I've wanted ever since I first laid eyes on you."

Toothless touched her head with his nose. "I'm sorry it took me so

long to realize."

"It doesn't matter." Mistyeyes murmured softly, refusing to look at the bad side of things. "It was worth the wait."

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **The best thing 'bout tonight's that we're not fightingâ€|**

Could it be that we have been this way before?

I know you don't think that I am trying. I know you're wearing thin down to the core.

But hold your breath because tonight will be the night that I will fall for you.

Over againâ€|don't make me change my mind. Or I won't live to see another day.

**I swear it's true. 'Cause a girl like you's impossible to find. You're impossible to find. **

Fall for You - Secondhand Serenade

Definitely one of my weaker chapters. At least in my opinion. Hopefully you don't think the same way, but I don't blame you if you do. It's why it took so long to get this out: I restarted it LITERALLY five times. NOTHING worked. I stressed out over it, raged over it, sobbed over it, and eventually just decided that this was the best it could be XDDD

Next chapter will be in the air! I'd best get pumped for flying scenes ;)

PLEASE REVIEW! I GO OFF REVIEWS IN THE SUMMER

50. Chapter 50

A/N: OH MAH JEEBUS. 50TH CHAPTER. I SHOULD DO SOMETHING SPECIAL.

â€|LIKE WHAT? XDDD

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Toothless and Mistyeyes shifted uneasily where they stood, looking anxiously forward at the large gathering of dragons. The Night Furies had all rushed out to head for the north side of the island even before the group of Berk could even think about getting there. While they showed excitement by even beating them all here, it left them waiting a lot longer than they were meant to in the first place. It left them a little less happy than Toothless would rather them to be, and the male let out a nervous mumble as he eyed the sky. The sun was nearly at its peak; if they were going to start, they'd have to do it soon.

Beside him, Mistyeyes seemed to share his concerns as she flashed a

glance in his direction. "I don't like this." She sighed, tail thumping down on the ground and creating an allegro* tempo of agitation. Looking up at the sky with squinted eyes, the gray dragon let out an irritated huff of air. "I can't believe Nightflight." She hissed almost scornfully. "How can she be late with an event like this? This is the _last _step we can take to make these dragons see sense. It's the last thing we're able to do, and what does _she _do? She sleeps in and ruins it all."

"Calm down." Toothless consoled her as gently as he could. He touched his nose to her ear, the female loosening slightly at his touch. "You're just nervous." He said, drawing back and looking out at the other dragons. "â€|I guess that's what we all are." He mumbled at this, deflating as he gave a weary sigh. "I just wish that Hiccup could make us feel better instead ofâ€|being Hiccup." He deadpanned at this, turning around and looking back at his human.

The boy was upright, arms flailing and gesturing the way they always did whenever he went into elaborate speeches. Astrid was looking at him with wide eyes, looking a cross between irritated and scared as she tried to absorb everything that he shot at her. Toothless wasn't exactly sure what they were talking over, but Hiccup made it sound like it was crucially important. Perking and tilting his head to the side, Toothless leaned towards the sound, tuning out the other Night Furies around them as he tried to catch a fragment of the boy's words.

"â€|so I guess the only thing you need to remember is to push down like this." He made a motion with his hand, pointing at it firmly as if to illustrate the importance of the movement. Astrid blinked, looking down at her foot as she copied the boy's demonstration, craning her neck as she watched herself carefully. Her lips moved silently to herself as she committed it to memory, continuing to move her foot in the awkward way until finally going slack.

Instead, the blonde shot her friend an exasperated look. "Do we really have to do this?" Astrid asked softly, wringing her hands together as she looked at Hiccup with a desperate sort of stare. "It just seems like a lot of pressure to put on all of us, and I don't think I can remember what way to push when." She paused a moment, shifting back and forth a little restlessly. "Shouldn't we just do what we know we can? If we mess up, we're not doing much help in letting the dragons to see how 'great' flyers dragons can be with humans." She broke off, looking at the sun for a heartbeat before turning around aimlessly. Her forehead creased with sudden confusion. "And what time is it?" She demanded. "And where's Ludi?"

"It's late." Hiccup said flatly, growing angered as the blonde brought up the topic of punctuality. He didn't answer about Ludi, figuring that if the cat twisted herself into a knot, she'd know how to get out. And she deserved the knot, too. Instead, he just turned around to Toothless, grabbing Astrid's hand and pulling her along behind him as he approached the couple. "Hey." He said, voice tight as he glanced over at the waiting crowd. "Where's Nightflight and Shadowclaw?"

Toothless opened his mouth to answer, but Mistyeyes cut him off, blue eyes widened with certain panic. "We don't know where Nightflight is." She said in a rush, wing flitting nervously at her sides. "Shadowclaw is with Leafdapple somewhere, he's fine. We don't need

him for this. But in order to truly show the others how much you can change with humans, we need Nightflight. What creates a better impact than a blind dragon flying?" Toothless flicked an ear at this, but Mistyeyes thumped him angrily with her tail, smacking him across the face without even turning back around to look at him. "The point is," Mistyeyes went on, tone clipped short. "we all need Nightflight here. She's letting us down by avoiding us, and the whole thing is falling apart and I dunno what I should do, and I'm pretty sure that Ludi is missing-"

"Don't worry about her!" Hiccup said, cutting through her words angrily. "Nightflight can't be avoiding us." He said reasonably, straightening unconsciously as his tone became a bit more firmer. Astrid noticed the change, eyes flashing as she gave him a warm smile. Not noticing the expression, Hiccup went on smoothly: "Alright." He sighed slowly. "Does anybody have a valid reason as to why on earth Nightflight could be avoiding us? It wouldn't make sense."

"â€|It might make a little senseâ€|" Toothless said regretfully, looking down at his feet as his ears flattened. Mistyeyes turned at this, mouth setting into a firm line as she tilted her head at him. Hiccup went still at this, eyes narrowing slowly as he looked from one dragon to another. Astrid stood off to the side awkwardly, rocking on her feet as she clasped her hands tightly behind her back. Toothless winced visibly as he could see Hiccup connecting the dots, and he felt his heart drop down to his claws as Hiccup suddenly gasped sharply.

"You twoâ€|?" He demanded at once, pointing in between the pair rapidly. Mistyeyes grimaced at this, and Toothless gave a nod, albeit reluctantly. The teen, instead of brightening at the prospect, slowly seemed to lapse into a silence. But then his hand shot up to smack against his forehead, the boy staggering backwards as he let out loud groan. "No!" He wailed, Astrid stiffening at the sudden outburst. "Youâ€|can'tâ€|you can't just-" Toothless and Mistyeyes exchanged a glance. "We were building a bridge here!" Hiccup yelled, spitting out a curse underneath his breath as he dropped his arm to his side.

"I wasn't thinking!" Toothless said firmly, taking a step forward, ahead of Mistyeyes. "It was my fault."

"No." Hiccup said wearily, letting his arm slip back down heavily to his side. "I'm happy for you, it's just-" He broke off, taking in the way that the two were sitting a little closer together than they normally did. His shoulders drooped with disappointment, though, and his eyes darkened with look that said: 'I thought you guys would have had more sense.' "â€|I'll find her." He said finally, turning his back on the two and facing Astrid. "Nightflight's gone off somewhere, and she may or may not be sad. I don't really get what's going on right now," His tone sharpened somewhat as he threw a look back at the two Night Furies. "but I think she needs someone to talk to her."

"Wait!" Astrid said quickly, blue eyes rounding out with bemusement. "W-What do I do with the dragons while you're gone?" She asked, jabbing an accusing finger out to the Night Furies gathered a few yards away. By now, the row closest to them were starting to take notice of the odd conversation, interest quickening as eyes turned their way. Hiccup followed her gesture, groaning weakly to himself as

he saw the gazes trained on the quartet. "I can't justâ€¦_stall_." Astrid pointed out obviously. "These dragons came for a flight show that would take place at _noon_. It's almost noon! Let's just do it without Nightflight, please? I don't want them to get impatient."

"They won't get impatient." Hiccup said in a rush. "Look, Astrid: Nightflight feels left out. Even more, now." Mistyeyes curled her tail tighter to herself at the statement. "If we go along with this plan without her, it'll just make things worse. Nightflight is a part of our group now, and we're a family, no matter what happens. We do this together, or we don't do it at all." By now, he'd changed his gaze from one person to another, addressing the whole of the group at this. "Got it? No going off by ourselves or putting things ahead of one another. Not now, and not ever. We're trying to join one group with another. If _we _can't even stay intact, then there's no point."

"But-" Toothless started.

"I get the whole thing with you and Nightflight." Hiccup said, breaking into his complaint. "But you have to realize at the same time, that it doesn't mean that this whole thing has to put out to dry. It doesn't matter what kind of drama is floating around, alright? She's not going away anytime soon; not if I can help it. So you _have _to make up with her. I'll be the one to go get her right now, but I really would rather you all to get along instead of just forcing yourselves to be in one another's company."

"You'd better hurry, then." Mistyeyes urged, getting to her feet. "I can distract them all by going over a few more things. Andâ€¦_answering questionsâ€¦I guess." She trailed off uncertainly, eyes flashing as she turned back to look at the crowd. "If they don't have any questions though, I don't know what much else I can do. You'll have to hurry." She tore her gaze away from the gathering, turning over and looking at the boy with a worried frown. "You sure you don't want me to come?" She asked hesitantly, tail flicking with nervousness even as she gave the offer. "You could be faster if you had one of us to take you there."

"No, I'll be fine." Hiccup said swiftly, turning around and putting his back to the female. "You need to stay here to stall and make some time for me. I'll be quick. And besides: even if I don't know the whole story between you three, even you guys can admit that she might not want to see you right now. Or talk to you."

Toothless twitched. "You don't think that she's going to go off on her own again, do you?"

Hiccup twisted his head back to look at his dragon. The look written across his face startled the Night Fury to say the least, the black dragon cocking his head with a confused expression as he looked at him human closely. It was a cross between impatience and irritation. As if he were thinking: 'You did something really stupid without thinking, and you should feel bad for it. Don't go running your mouth when you don't know what you're talking about. I love you, but seriously, come on.' The look was exactly the kind of thing that Hiccup's father threw down to him, and now Hiccup was using it on Toothless and Mistyeyes. "No." He said slowly. "I don't think she'll do anything like that. Butâ€¦_stillâ€¦I want to make sure."

"We're sorryâ€|" Mistyeyes offered lamely.

By now, most of the dragons were starting to look in their direction.

"Don't be." Hiccup assured her swiftly, eyeing the group behind them before giving yet another sigh. "Just stall for as long as you can. Astrid, stay behind Toothless just in case."

"Just in case of what?" Astrid asked in a panic.

"Just in case!" Hiccup repeated, giving the girl a sour look. "And remember what I told you, too." The girl deflated at this. "After making them all wait like this, we're going to need something big to make sure they go in our direction." He looked back one last time at the others, biting his lower lip nervously. "I'll be _right _back." He said in a certain rush, turning around and breaking into a run as he made for the cave. "Start talking!" He yelled behind him, Mistyeyes's eyes rounding out with desperation as he raced away. She sat numbly for a moment, stiff as she watched him leave. He'd gotten skilled at maneuvering with his fake leg by now; he was gone in a matter of minutes.

"We screwed this whole thing up." Toothless said softly, coming up to stand beside her.

"I hope not." She whimpered, leaning over and taking a moment to press herself against the dragon. She drew strength from his presence as best she could, taking a few steadying breathes before giving a tense nod. "Alright." She said gravely, righting herself as she made for the head of the gathered crowd. "It's now or never." She mumbled, looking back at Toothless, who had taken to standing neatly beside Astrid. The blonde was clearly put-out without knowing what was going on, frowning sullenly as he watched Hiccup leave without her.

Clearing her throat and giving a large gulp, the dragon tilted her chin upwards, narrowing her eyes and digging her claws into the ground. "Listen up!" She yowled, lifting her tail into the air as she vied for the attention of the others. At once, the mumbles and murmurs of separate conversations tapered off into an abrupt silence, dragons of all ages whirling around to look back at her. The female's eyes narrowed as she caught sight of a few Night Furies that weren't present. Like Fleetfoot, Frost, Ember, or Hutch. Others of those who had opposed humans greatly weren't attending the effort, and Mistyeyes felt a stubborn flash of frustration towards them.

Pushing aside her agitation, she smiled brightly instead, curling her tail neatly around her as she took a seat. Dipping her head to those who _had _come, the dragon tried her best to give off a positive aura. "Thank you for coming here today." She started off, making sure that she didn't give light to the worry coursing through her. "Before we started to show you this last thing, I was wondering if there were a few questions I could answer? Or any additional information that you guys needed?"

Silence met her words, and the dragon stilled as suspicious looks were thrown her way.

"None?" She asked, voice coming out in a high squeak.

Toothless shifted uneasily, ears flattening slowly to his head as the quiet stretched on.

Mistyeyes's smile slowly faltered into an awkward grimace.

Still nothing.

Hiccup, you'd better hurry up.

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

Nightflight grunted and wheezed with the effort of her spell, eyes narrowed into angered slits as she stared straight ahead. The only reason she knew she was looking in the right direction at all was the small twitching of the cat's tail against her paw. She blew out her cheeks as she fumed inwardly, feeling as if she were putting way too much effort into this than she normally did. But it didn't matter really, nothing she was doing before was working too much right now. She'd been trying for the past hour and nothing had worked. Then again, she probably could have used a more sensible partner to test it.

Finally, she blew out a huff of air, staggering on her feet as she felt her head spin. But she shook herself roughly, leaning down until she could feel the cat's whiskers brush her snout. "Do you understand me _now_?" She demanded tirelessly, reaching out and poking the smaller thing with one claw softly. "Poke me like that if you understand me." She ordered firmly, voice clenched with authority, as if the cat would understand her. When she did nothing in response, Nightflight stamped her right foot on the ground angrily. "Ludi! You're not helping me!" She snapped furiously. "Poke me!"

Nothing.

"It's clearly obvious that I put too much faith into you, cat." She growled, sitting down with a heavy thud on the grass. Ludi chirped out a mew in reply, and Nightflight rolled her eyes angrily. She'd just wasted an hour trying to do something that now looked impossible to do. Hunching her shoulders and silently cursing the world, Nightflight dragged her claws through the dirt, gouging out a shallow hole into the ground. Venting out her frustration, she was about to shred the entire clearing into pieces. But then a rapid set of footsteps reached her ears, the Night Fury perking at the urgent-sounding pace as she looked towards its direction. "Who's there?" She asked, ears flicking up at once.

"It's me!" Hiccup's voice met her quizzical question, the Viking rushing up to a relieved stop at her side. The boy hunched over quickly, hands on his knees as he gasped sharply for air. "Oh gods." He huffed, reaching up and using his sleeve to wipe off his forehead. "Ran way too fast." He inhaled and exhaled in rapid bursts. "Had to find you. We need you to fly with us. Toothless and I, that is. Astrid needs you. Wouldn't do it without you."

"Flying?" Nightflight repeated. "Wait what time is it?"

"It's past noon!" Hiccup said, finally managing to catch his breath

as he straightened firmly. "The sun is right up in the sky, can't you-" He broke off, eyes widening before he could finish the thought. Nightflight looked at him sourly, obviously catching onto what he hadn't let himself say. Letting his hands swing back down loosely at his sides, Hiccup bit his lip a little guiltily. Hoping to distract the dragon from his blunder, he raised an eyebrow at her quizzically. "What're you doing here? And why do you have Ludi?"

The female sighed sadly. "I was trying to see if I could replicate the spell I put on you." She mumbled, dragging her claws much more slowly through the earth now. "She was the only person I could find to try and test on. I couldn't find anyone else in the cave. I guess that's because I didn't get the memo of the time." Hiccup blinked at this, interest quickening at her efforts. "I thought that if I could get the humans to be able to listen to me and hear my side of the story like you did, it would be much easier to join the two groups together." Her ears flattened down to her head though, and she looked away mournfully. "But I couldn't get it to work." She said, voice riddled with disappointment. "I tried for a long time, but nothing worked. No matter what I tried, I could replicate anything at all."

"Heyâ€|that's okayâ€|" Hiccup said comfortingly, feeling a flash of sadness as he looked at her. "I didn't even think to ask you about that; at least you thought of it yourself and tried. It only matters that you tried." He reached over, putting a hand on the female's shoulder and giving her a bright smile. "We can do it without the spell." He promised. "I'll make them all see sense, you can trust me on that one, okay? I won't let them hurt the other Night Furies, and I certainly won't let them hurt you. So there isn't anything to worry about."

"But there is." Nightflight sighed. "I feel like I haven't done much to help this cause."

"You've done plenty." Hiccup said firmly, almost offended by the words. "You fought against Frost, you told the Night Furies how much you've changed, you saved me about a million timesâ€|Nightflight, you've done just as much as anybody else has. If not even more." He paused a moment, shoulders drooping suddenly as he said a little bit more tentatively: "That isn't the problem, though." He decided, watching as Nightflight stiffened considerably. Giving a small sigh under his breath, Hiccup let a frown grace his features.

"Nightflightâ€|just because Toothless is with Mistyeyes now, that doesn't mean he thinks lesser of you. He said himself just yesterday how much he believes in you now. Just because they got together doesn't mean that you have to prove yourself all over again. They already know how much you've put into this."

"I knowâ€|" She sighed, not sounding confident at all. "It's justâ€|I don't know."

Hiccup glanced at the sky, feeling a twinge of panic at the sight of the sun. But he shook himself, pushing away the worries as he took a few more steps towards the dragon. He draped an arm around the female's neck loosely, giving her a wide grin. "It doesn't matter what they do or think, alright?" He encouraged her. "You're doing perfectly fine so far; you don't need to worry yourself with what they think. The only thing that matters right now is going out there and showing those other Night Furies how capable you are with us now."

You need to show yourself off like there's no tomorrow."

She snickered dryly. "There might not be." She said humorlessly.

"TouchÃ©." Hiccup said, taking a step backwards and bringing his arm back to himself quickly. "Which is why we should probably get back to others and do what we're supposed to instead of sitting here." He turned, stooping down and gathering Ludi quickly in his arms as he cradled the cat close to his chest. Going back over to Nightflight and hoisting himself onto the dragon's back, he situated himself neatly for a moment before saying anything else. "Alright, we gotta hurry." The boy said, casting yet another look up towards the air. "For now, the only people you worry about are me and Astrid, 'kay? We're the only people that matter at the moment."

"Don't you think that's a little self-centered?" She mused lightly, flattening herself down to the ground. Her wings unfurled at her sides, shooting out and arching gracefully as she gathered her bearings. Hiccup tightened his hold on her comfortably, smiling at the certain ease that the dragon had adopted with flying. It showed that they were getting somewhere at least, and the teenager had to feel a flash of satisfaction at the minor detail.

"It's not being self-centered." He said easily, making sure that Ludi wouldn't fall. "Not if it's a fact, that is."

"I'll remember that." Nightflight said.

"Promise?" He asked. "No more thinking you're not worth it. Because we all are."

"â€|" The dragon ducked her head for a moment, smiling to herself warmly. "Sometimes I wonder how we got here." She said hesitantly, wings starting to search out for the breeze, wanting to catch the air so that the female could swoop out into the sky. "I feel like it was only yesterday that I wanted to tear your head off."

"That's because it probably was yesterday." Hiccup answered. "Now, let's get up into the air to give those dragons a what-for!" He cheered, not wanting the female to lapse back into her sad depression. Nightflight brightened at this thankfully, bunching her muscles and pushing off the ground with a large bound. Ludi squawked where she was curled up in Hiccup's lap, ducking away from the icy wind as she burrowed herself into his tunic.

Hiccup beamed against the glare of the sun, feeling himself warm up at once. Nightflight's words rang true in their own sense, and Hiccup had to wonder how exactly they did become so close over the past few days. Though he didn't want to question it too much, he had to think back to the days when she was the cause of all of his problems. Of Toothless leaving him, of him being so lonely, of him getting the ridiculous cat that he wanted to throw out into the ocean. Sure, there was heartache before this, that was certainly no understatement. But he realized that he was thankful that Nightflight had done what she did, even back then.

Because if she hadn't come to Berk, who knows what he would be doing right now?

He wouldn't have met Mistyeyes or Shadowclaw, or done any of these amazing feats or met his challenges like he was doing right now. Though the hard times, a good future really carved itself out for them, and he had to appreciate every little thing that he had now. Or would have. Feeling a wave of affection for the Night Fury, the boy smiled softly, green eyes softening as he looked down at her. Sure, they had a bad past. But the feelings back then were nothing compared to the ones he could have now.

"Sorry." Nightflight said suddenly, clouded eyes weighing themselves down as she looked straight ahead. "About what I put everyone through. It took me too long to see past my own nose."

"It doesn't matter." Hiccup said warmly. "It was worth the wait."

(~*~) (~*~) (~*~) (~*~)

"What's taking so long?" A dragon bristled, baring his teeth as he looked up at the sun, which was slowly sliding down from its high point in the sky. Night Furies never were prided on their patience, Mistyeyes thought dully. "I came here hours ago to see this thing! I've been waiting for ages, and I still have nothing to show for it!" Night Furies seated around the male shifted uneasily at his tone, some giving out nods of agreement to his complaint. But most of the dragons just seemed a little uncomfortable as they stared awkwardly at Mistyeyes. Their excitement and expectancy had slowly melted into irritation and tense features. For the umpteenth time the past hour, Mistyeyes turned back and shot a desperate look over to Toothless. The Night Fury had recently took a more protective stance in front of Astrid as he caught sight of the angered glares, returning her strained look to show that he was just as panicked.

"_Listen_" Shadowclaw yelled, standing stiffly beside Leafdapple towards the center of the crowd. "Mistyeyes said that Hiccup is coming back, so that means he's coming back! Yelling and whining won't help anything! We've come here with a calm approach in showing you the effect of humans! You can't just demolish the purpose by fuming around like you're a youngling who didn't get its way!" Leafdapple blinked rapidly, stunned as she stared at Shadowclaw with round eyes. "Now calm down, sit down, and stop throwing your weight around!" He roared angrily.

The Night Fury that had spoken up first opened his jaws to bark out a retort, but he didn't get the chance. No sooner had Shadowclaw finished speaking, a black shape suddenly shot forward, coming out of nowhere and careening towards the crowd. Toothless's eyes widened with shock at the sudden arrival, and immediately gasped at the thought of it crashing into the gathered dragons below them. He could see that it was Nightflight, the dragon really pushing it as she flew at breakneck speeds. "They're going too fast!" Mistyeyes hissed, falling back to stand beside him, frozen with fright. "They're going to crash!" Her voice came out as a startled squeak.

"No." Toothless said tightly, wincing as she got lower and lower. "Hiccup wouldn't let her."

The dragons milling around the clearing caught sight of the dragon crashing down towards them, letting out shrieks of shock and surprise. Dragons stood and tried to run away, others just flattened

themselves down to the ground in an attempt to brace themselves against the sure impact. Shadowclaw's eyes widened, and Leafdapple unconsciously ducked into his slender frame, closing her green eyes tightly. Toothless's eyes trained themselves firmly onto Hiccup, the boy looking frazzled and caught off-guard as his eyes widened. But then he set his jaw backwards, gripping Nightflight's neck and pulling upwards.

Inches above the tallest Night Fury's head, Nightflight pulled up into a sharp incline, swooping back up into the air like the whole thing was planned. And by the reactions on the faces of the dragons around them, Toothless could see that they did indeed think that it was perfectly executed. But it was clear by the look of absolute relief on Hiccup's face that it was anything but. The glares and mumbling that had taken control of the Night Furies immediately turned into gasps of awe and impressed looks. Cheers went up around Toothless and Mistyeyes as Hiccup and Nightflight landed neatly beside them, the Night Furies shooting to their feet as they watched with newly-bated breath.

Hiccup slipped off of Nightflight in a rush, Toothless already taking his place neatly as Hiccup changed to sit on Toothless's back. Astrid flashed by, leaning over and patting Nightflight's snout with a smile before she did the same. Mistyeyes sat in between the two waiting dragons, but when Hiccup got situated on Toothless, she immediately rounded on him. "That was too risky." She said at once, eyes narrowing with angered concern.

Hiccup only shrugged at her carelessly. "We're going to be taking risks for the next few minutes."

Astrid looked at him worriedly, moving her foot in the odd way once more. Toothless eyed the motion oddly.

"Just be careful." She tried softly, looking pained as she glanced at Toothless as well.

"We'll be fine." Hiccup pressed, turning away from her and looking down at Toothless. "You ready?"

"Aren't you going to strap yourself in?" The male asked curiously.

"No." Hiccup said shortly, not explaining the odd answer before he turned over to Nightflight and Astrid. "You guys ready over there?" He called out loudly, green eyes shining the way they always did whenever he was about to go flying. Astrid shot the boy a rather nervous smile, reaching up with her arm and shooting them a thumb's up. Nightflight shifted on her feet, eyes narrowed into thoughtful slits, as if she were running over a few moves she used to be able to do in her head.

Ludi had long since leapt off of Nightflight's back, the little cat bouncing over to Mistyeyes and plopping down at the dragon's feet in a heap. Her eyes gleamed excitedly as she let out a few chirps, wriggling where she sat as if she couldn't sit still. Hiccup shot the little animal a look, silencing her for the most part as she quieted sourly. Turning his attention back to where it was supposed to be, Hiccup took a slow breath inwards, calming his frayed nerves before giving a self-assured nod.

"Alright, Toothless!" He said loudly, noticing as he caught the attention of the waiting dragons. "Let's fly!" Letting out a yip, Toothless gathered himself for a fraction of a second before pushing off the air with a mighty leap. His wings extended in a sharp snap, catching the wind as he did a large arc into the sky. Hiccup ran through the dragon's fake tail's motions rapidly, clicking his fake foot in accordance with the movements as Toothless arched his back, going into a long back flip before turning to gain more air. Hiccup twisted in the saddle, looking back to where Astrid and Nightflight were.

The pair had taken longer in getting off the ground, but they were gradually catching up as they shot after them. Astrid's mouth was moving a mile a minute, and Hiccup hoped fervently that she knew what she was talking about. Below, the clearing had plunged into a tense silence as the eyes of every single Night Fury bored into the four characters up in the air. And now, Hiccup was starting to feel a little nervous. This was their last chance; they had to play it perfect. "Go back to Nightflight and Astrid, Toothless." He said down to the dragon, the Night Fury's ears perking at the order.

Changing direction abruptly, Toothless shot backwards, going into a tight spin as he retraced his flying pattern. Nightflight and Astrid slowed as they saw them doubling back, and Hiccup fought to keep his head from spinning as Toothless went into a series of corkscrews. But eventually Toothless skidded to a neat hover, barely even fazed as he stopped in front of Astrid. Hiccup blinked rapidly, shooing away his dizzy spell before he was able to get Astrid's head to stop shaking around in front of him. "Hey." He said in a rush, glancing down at the crowd. "Don't feel like you have to do anything that me and Toothless do." He said firmly. "It's advanced, and you and Nightflight won't be able to do it."

Astrid and Nightflight frowned in harmony. "I take offense to that." The blonde snapped.

"I'm just saying you don't have enough practice." Hiccup amended. "Don't try anything you can't do."

"I can do _anything _you can." Astrid spat angrily.

"Fine." Hiccup said, a challenging glint sparkling in the back of his eyes as he sized the girl up critically. Against his better judgment, and going against what he was supposed to be doing in the first place, the Viking leaned back, crossing his arms over his chest loosely. "You wanna put your words to the test?" He invited. Astrid screwed up her mouth, eyes narrowing into determined slits as she silently took the bet. "Fine." Hiccup repeated. "It's your funeral, though. Don't say I didn't warn you."

"May the best flier win." Astrid shot back firmly.

"We're doomed." Mistyeyes whispered where she sat.

Hiccup locked his foot backwards, Toothless turning away from the two girls as he shot up into the cloud. Hiccup clung tightly to the dragon's back, painfully aware of the fact that there was nothing holding him onto the dragon since he didn't strap himself to the saddle. Astrid and Nightflight sat back silently, waiting silently as

the pair gained altitude. If Hiccup didn't know Astrid any better, he could have sworn that the girl's mouth was moving, as if coaching Nightflight through something. But he pushed the thought away quickly, stopping Toothless when he felt like they'd gotten high enough. Below, the island that the Night Furies called home was a small smudge, and Hiccup let out a slow huff of air at this. "Alright." He said. "You ready?"

"Always." Toothless answered rather smugly.

Hiccup grinned, snapping his foot back to himself and bringing it out of the lock with a sharp snap. Toothless's wings immediately quickened as he floundered slightly, always having a bit of difficulty before the two went into a free-fall. But then he angled himself correctly, Hiccup's grip on the dragon loosening slightly as the wind started to tug him off his perch. Letting go of the dragon completely, Hiccup closed his eyes as he let the wind rip him into its clutches. Gluing his arms tightly to his side, Hiccup's face broke into a smile as he made sure that he and Toothless were falling at the same rate.

Gasps and cheers rose from their audience, and as Hiccup flashed by Astrid and Nightflight, he couldn't help but yell out at them. "Beat that!" He shouted, voice coming and going as fast as he did. Astrid cocked an eyebrow at the boy, but didn't do anything in response. She merely watched as Hiccup spun through the air, wind whipping at his hair and clothes as he let out a large laugh. Toothless shot his human wide, gummy smile, wings tucked close to his sides.

When Hiccup could start to make out the scared eyes of Mistyeyes, he figured that they'd fallen far enough. He whipped forward, Toothless catching the movement as his wings shot out firmly. Hiccup hooked his way neatly back onto the dragon's saddle, locking his prosthetic in its place firmly and sling-shooting around the watching dragons, taking pride in their startled expressions. Toothless obviously did as well, grinning slyly as he swerved to the side suddenly. Hiccup gasped sharply, trying to keep up with Toothless as the dragon started to weave through the crowd. Pushing his luck and showing off his agility, the male skirting around, over, and through the very heart of the mass, green eyes shining with triumph as he accomplished the task.

Flashing by Mistyeyes and giving out an amusing: 'Hey', the Night Fury soared back into the sky again, purring at himself as he gave another small spin. Hiccup's shoulders shook with laughter, and he relished in the fact that he hadn't felt this carefree in a long time. But Astrid and Nightflight didn't look impressed at them when they came to stop. "Think you can do better than that?" Hiccup asked, breathing heavily from the effort as he gave Astrid a wide grin.

"Nightflight can beat you guys with one wing tied behind her back." Astrid snapped out shortly, blue eyes flashing as she tightened her hold on the female. Hiccup waved invitingly, raising an eyebrow at the girl and sitting back more comfortably on Toothless's saddle. Astrid's gaze hardened stubbornly, the girl leaning down and patting the dragon assuredly on her head. "C'mon, Nightflight." She said stiffly. "Let's give these guys a what-for."

Nightflight was still for a few moment, shooting the two a smirking

glare. When they didn't move for a few moments, Hiccup started to say something. "You guys are-" He broke off, eyes shooting open wide as Nightflight suddenly disappeared from sight. Looking down wildly, Hiccup's grip tightened on Toothless as he caught sight of them already yards away from them. Nightflight was like a streak of black against the sharp blue behind her, a mere blur as she free-fell towards the ocean. Hiccup found himself stiffening at once, biting his lower lip anxiously as they got closer and closer towards the sea. "You think they're gonna crash?" He asked softly.

"Oh yeah." Toothless said, nodding stiffly. "They're gonna hit the water."

And they did hit the water. But Nightflight tilted herself at the last minute, going on her side and extending her wing outwards stiffly. The wing stuck itself through the water, throwing up sea spray as the two went into a curve. Hiccup's breath hitched as he caught sight of the strained look on Nightflight's face as she performed the feat, having to focus intently on using her other wing and not budging the other at the same time. They spun in a tight spiral for a heartbeat before Nightflight's wing curved forward sharply, a large arc of water shooting into the air and catching the sunlight with a sharp rainbow glare. The Night Fury flew through the splash quickly, before it could fall back down. She burst through the rainbow's shine, shooting back up into the air as they flew by the crowd.

"What were you saying?" Astrid puffed when they rejoined the pair.

Hiccup smirked, eyes narrowing slyly as he took in the two in a new light. "So it's a contest you want?" He asked, Astrid throwing him a peppy smile as she shrugged. But it was obvious by the look she was giving him that she wasn't about to admit he was the better flier. "'Kay." Hiccup said slowly. "You're on. Let's see who can woo the crowd more, huh?"

"Hey, Toothless." Nightflight said suddenly, catching the dragon's attention as he looked over at her. "We never did get to finish our race properly." She said, giving him a grin. "Let's see who can go fastest, huh?" Toothless's ears flicked excitedly at the challenge. "Maybe this time Hiccup can keep up with you." She added, eyes flashing at the memory.

"Alright." Toothless purred. "Ladies first."

"Okay." Nightflight said simply. "Go ahead."

Toothless growled at this, eyes softening with amusement as he glanced up at Hiccup. The boy met his gaze and gave a nod. Shooting Nightflight one last look, Toothless turned and put distance in between the two teams before doing anything. "You ready?" He asked Hiccup, who hummed out a short reply as he tightened his hold on Toothless. The dragon abruptly tucked his wings into his sides, curling up into himself as he threw his weight forward as best he could. Hiccup ducked close to the male's back, closing his eyes as the world started to do 360's around them. Like his own fireball, Toothless ducked forward into a million summersaults, spinning rapidly as the pair fell towards the water. Mind going in circles, Hiccup watched carefully, trying to time their pull-up as best he

could with what he could manage to see.

But by the time that they stopped, Hiccup realized that Astrid had already started her next trick. She didn't even wait out their own. The blonde and Nightflight were busy sweeping back and forth across the ocean. They ducked under the surface, throwing up water around them, and making the droplets shatter in intricate designs. Blowing out his cheeks, Hiccup steered Toothless forward. The boys shot for Nightflight and Astrid, Hiccup's hair flattening to his head with the speed of their flight.

Astrid brought Nightflight to stop as she caught sight of them, the girls looking at them curiously as they met towards the center of the sea. "Pretty good. Pretty good." Hiccup said, Toothless flashing forward and doing a neat flip over them so that they could be side-by-side. Once they were aligned together, Hiccup looked over at Astrid. "I'd say it's a pretty fair tie." He offered teasingly.

"Oh, no." Astrid said finally. "We can decide who wins with this last move."

Hiccup straightened, surprise flashing through his eyes as he eyed her. "You sure?" He asked.

A bit more hesitantly, Astrid nodded. "Sure." She said. "Why not? We've got them on board already." She nodded over to the crowd of Night Furies, who were looking intently at the humans, eyes lit up as they stared at the two. "Might as well end on a high note." She paused a moment before: "Wellâ€¦if we get the trick right, that is."

"We've never practiced it before."

"I think we'll be fine." Astrid assured him.

Hiccup hesitated, eyeing the girl carefully. But then he grinned, giving a nod as he shifted on Toothless's back. "Alright." He said happily, a hint of excitement creeping into his tone. "Let's do it." But before Astrid could jerk Nightflight back into motion, Hiccup stopped her. "Be careful." He told her firmly, almost glaring at her as he spoke the words. "I don't want you getting hurt, okay? Don't do anything if you can't manage it."

"I'll be fine." Astrid said gently.

"â€¦Okay." Hiccup said softly.

Holding his gaze for a few more moments, Astrid finally shook herself. The blonde turned, holding on tight to Nightflight and pushing the dragon forward. At once, Nightflight turned, going in the direction that Astrid leaned as she shot backwards. Toothless watched the girls go curiously, looking up at staring at Hiccup a little anxiously. "What're you up to up there?" He asked curiously, ears flicking back and forth as he suddenly became on-edge.

"We're going to switch up." Hiccup explained, pushing his foot backwards as Toothless immediately reacted. The dragon turned, flying in the direction opposite of Nightflight for a few yards before angling himself up to gain altitude. Hiccup glanced over his shoulder, trying to go the same distance as Astrid and Nightflight

were. But there were far away; it was hard for the boy to judge their height formally. Hoping that his best guess would be enough to get them along, he brought Toothless to a hover. Astrid did the same, the girl only a splotch of yellow in Hiccup's eyesight. But he could feel her gaze boring into his own.

"Waitâ€¦what?" Toothless asked in a panic, stiffening. "Can Nightflight _do_ that?"

"â€¦Just catch Astrid when she jumps for you." Hiccup said, skirting the question.

"Hiccup!" Toothless yelled. "What if Nightflight doesn't catch you?"

"Gee, I was trying not to think about that." The boy growled.

"Not think about it?" Toothless repeated in a rush. "Hiccup, you could-"

His words were cut off suddenly as Hiccup moved his foot backwards sharply. Toothless found himself suddenly rocketing down to the ocean, wings tilting this way and that as he tried to keep his balance. Heart pounding, Toothless looked across the sea to where Nightflight was. The female was doing the same as Toothless, starting to change position so that the two would flash by one another. With the speed that they were going at the moment, that would leave Hiccup and Astrid only a small time window to switch dragons. And there was also the more pressing matter at hand: Astrid didn't know how to use his tailfin.

But as Toothless noticed that they were nowhere close to the water yet, he finally made the connection with the girl's awkward foot movements. Hiccup had taught her only one way to control his tailfin, and that was the motion it took to land. That meant that they couldn't be too far away from the land. But it also meant that it had to go perfectly, otherwise he and Astrid would smack against the surface of the ocean like a fish did to the ground.

"This is crazy!" Toothless howled over the wind.

Hiccup only leaned forward, eyes narrowing.

Nightflight and Toothless were at the same height now. The two Night Furies shot straight for one another, a head-on-collision in the making as they got closer and closer. "I hope you know what you're doing!" Toothless yelled, heart in his throat as he could make out every scale on Nightflight by now. On Nightflight's back, Astrid was already starting to stand, azure eyes wide with fright as she stared at Hiccup. But the teenager held a look of grim concentration by now, all challenge that had previously been on his face having disappeared a long time ago. His green eyes were calculating, and finally, he barked out a short question.

"Ready?" He asked stiffly.

"No!" Toothless howled.

"Okay then!" Hiccup yelled. "Let's go!" Abruptly, he ripped his foot out of its latch, holding on tightly to Toothless as he shot rapidly

up to his feet. He and Astrid were able to make eye contact now, and Hiccup gave her a sudden nod as he gathered himself. Toothless floundered as he tried to keep up the glide and not lose altitude at the same time. Suddenly, Hiccup pushed off of Toothless's back, Astrid doing the same with Nightflight as the two humans suddenly became airborne.

As the two flashed by one another, the whole island was silent. Leafdapple's green eyes grew wide with fear and amazement, Shadowclaw and Mistyeyes watching with distressed looks. The other Night Furies around them were still as they watched the scene. Time seemed to slow down as Astrid and Hiccup made their desperate leap for one another's dragon, the two sharing the same look of terrified concentration as they looked firmly down at their targets.

Hiccup was first to land on Nightflight. Grabbing desperately, the boy managed to slam into the female's back, arms locking around her neck as he hung on. For a scary heartbeat, Hiccup's legs slipped out from underneath him, the boy finding himself overshooting the leap as he hung off of Nightflight's back like a rag doll. To her credit, the female kept flying in a straight line. But exhaustion was creased over her face like a heavy curtain as she fought to keep Hiccup on her. Grunting, Hiccup looped his foot back around with a sharp tug, righting himself as his nerves slowly started to rebuild themselves. He managed to get himself back into a sitting position, relief washing over him as he let out a loose sigh. "Good job, Nightflight." He whispered fervently.

Astrid, however, landed perfectly on target. She slammed into Toothless full on, immediately straightening with a panicked gasp as she struggled to remember what Hiccup had coached her to do. Turning rapidly, the girl identified the tailfin's control system, doing her best to fit her foot down into the metal contraption. Hiccup had told her that it would be a little challenging since it was modified to hit Hiccup's fake foot and not like his old one. But he'd told her that it would work either way if she just pressed down in the right spot.

She sincerely hoped that she remembered that spot correctly.

Below, she could see Hiccup and Nightflight already coming in for a landing on the island. The rest of the Night Furies has diverted their attention to her, and Astrid felt a certain sinking feeling in her stomach at the thought of the spotlight on her. Sucking in a short breath to calm herself, Astrid studied her foot, feeling Toothless start to lose ground. Biting her lower lip and checking herself rapidly to make sure she was right, Astrid copied the movement that Hiccup had demonstrated to her, closing her eyes as she pushed back on the metal contraption.

At once, she realized that she had done something right. Toothless's flying was still a little chaotic, but it smoothed out somewhat, the dragon unfurling his wings fully as he made for the island as quickly as he could. Astrid looked down at the metal hooking, pressing back a little harder in an effort to get Toothless to smooth out. He did somewhat, but it didn't work as well as when Hiccup maneuvered the dragon. She didn't have a fake foot on her; she was just going to have to work with all she could.

Helping her out a little bit, Toothless made lunges out towards the

mass of land, and eventually the two were finally able to make a landing, albeit clumsily. Toothless gasped, limbs shaking with the effort of holding himself up as his face creased with exhaustion as he tried to regain his footing. Half-falling off of her perch, Astrid made another clumsy feat as she got off of Toothless. The Night Fury was left tired after his frantic attempts to remain in the air, and Mistyeyes immediately dashed over to him worriedly. She poked and prodded him with her nose, scolding him for his risky behavior as she searched for any injuries. Toothless purred softly at the efforts, nudging her away with a kind look. "I'm fine." He said easily, pressing his forehead briefly to her own before drawing back. "We did it." He offered after a heartbeat of hesitation.

Mistyeyes let out a huge sigh, smiling with relief at him. "Yes." She said. "You both did wonderfully."

Over to the side, Nightflight was caught off-guard as Night Furies immediately swamped her, shouting out questions and praise at her surprisingly-stuffing performance. Shadowclaw and Leafdapple were among the people in the crowd, cheering along with the other as they jumped up and down excitedly. The female looked overwhelmed by such a response, looking as if she were about to break down as dragons yelled out support for her.

"Wow, Nightflight! That was amazing!"

"How can you do that without sight?"

"Is it really that easy when you're with humans?"

"Do it again! Do it again! That was awesome!"

"You're still such a good flier! Even now!"

Even though she couldn't get a grasp on the actual words that the dragons were calling out to the female, Astrid's eyes softened gradually as her heart melted. She could do her best to guess what they said, and the thought was enough to satisfy the blonde for all the scary flying that she had just went through. Pretty soon, though, she realized that through the mass of Night Furies, she wasn't able to see Hiccup anymore. Panic closing over her throat for a moment, Astrid looked around wildly for the boy, eyes widening as she called out for him. "Hiccup?" She asked. "Hiccup!" She yelled.

Suddenly, the boy jumped out in front of her, green eyes shining like little sun as he grabbed her wrists tightly. "We did it!" He cheered, voice cracking a little humorously as he ducked close to the girl. "We did it! We did it! We did it! I can't believe it! It went perfectly!" He paused, smile only getting wider as he looked at her. "Astrid, you were amazing! I had no idea you could have Nightflight do all of that! It was spectacular! _You _were spectacular! This is amazing!"

"Calm down." Astrid laughed, leaning forward and hugging her Viking tightly. "It was just flying."

"No." Hiccup mumbled, returning the hug as he wrapped his arms tightly around her. "It was much more than that."

"Attention!" Hiccup sprang away from Astrid at the sudden yowl that

echoed around them, eyes wide as he searched for the owner of the voice. Astrid clung tightly to his hand at the roar, looking rather apprehensive as she bit her lower lip. From across the clearing, Talon stood outlined against the sun, eyes narrowed as he took in the sight in front of him. "I think I speak for all of us here when I say this." He said firmly, turning around and looking at Mistyeyes and Toothless as he dipped his head to them respectfully. But before they could do anything else, he turned over to Nightflight, putting his back to them as he addressed the dragoness.

"Nightflight." He called out, the female jerking to attention at the sound of her name. "You were exiled from this island after you led with an iron claw. And when you came back with these others, we shunned you from the cave." Nightflight's ears flicked back to her head, kneading her claws nervously against the ground. Mistyeyes and Toothless exchanged a nervous look at the words, Shadowclaw and Leafdapple becoming confused. Hiccup's eyes hardened angrily at the comments, starting forward with an angered glare. Astrid reached forward quickly to try and stop the boy, but he wrenched himself away from her quickly, not even looking back at the girl as he rushed forward. Talon's eyes narrowed, opening his mouth to go on. But he broke off swiftly as Hiccup sprinted forward.

The dragon watched with a careful eye as the boy skidded to a stop squarely in front of the female. He threw open his arms, as if to shield her from the hateful words. His green eyes burned angrily as he looked up at Talon, jaw locked backwards firmly as he planted his feet into the ground. Talon looked down on the boy, expecting him to shrink underneath the stare. But Hiccup only narrowed his eyes further, glaring up challengingly at the elder, daring him to go on.

And he did. Talon closed his eyes, taking a small breath before saying anything else. "The Night Furies labeled you as a menace, and rightfully so back then. We were so caught up with the anger and hatred we had against you because of your past, and when you came back, we were unwilling to listen to anything you had to say." His eyes blinked themselves open at this, looking down at Hiccup with a sudden change of heart. "But these humans came for not only the reason stated: to show us more about Berk." Hiccup's guard slipped slightly at this, blinking as his arms started to droop at the ends. "But they also came here to show us how we were wrong about you. And how we were wrong in our ways of thinking in the past."

Nightflight went rigid at this, breath hitching in her throat at the words.

Talon ducked his head, genuflecting in her direction. "You've overcome many obstacles to get here." He acknowledged. "And only for the sake of showing us more about humans and Berk. I respect you for everything you've done, and I sincerely hope every other dragon here does." Mummings of agreement and appreciation rippled through the crowd like waves. "You've shown us that the past can be forgotten in order to prosper in the future, Nightflight." Talon paused a moment, turning and looking curiously down at Hiccup. "So have you, little one." He added, Hiccup straightening from his stance as he gave Talon an awkward nod. "I know I speak for myself when I say that I have much to learn from you both."

Nightflight and Hiccup both looked at one another.

Talon took a few steps backwards, raising his voice into a yowl as he addressed the group of Night Furies that were listening intently. "It is time to go back to the cave!" He yelled, the dragons brightening at once. It seemed like they knew what that meant, apparently. "We will gather in the main cavern, and we will cast the vote!"

"Cast the vote?" Hiccup whispered harshly, looking over fearfully at Astrid. The girl was taking a few steps backwards, some of the Night Furies looking over at her with odd looks. It was like they were a mix between excited and subdued. Like they were waiting for something and they could hardly contain themselves. A million situations flashed through Hiccup's mind, each more gruesome than the last as he swallowed thickly. Suddenly, he wished that he hadn't brushed Astrid off so easily. Raising his voice to a frantic tone, Hiccup whirled around to face Talon, heart throbbing in his ears. "Cast the vote?" He repeated, louder this time as he caught the male's attention. "What does that mean?"

Talon turned over to him, dipping his head once more. "We're going to go back the cave and gather in one room." He explained for the human. "We will trade knowledge one last time with one another before we finally cast in the vote on what we should do."

Hiccup's frantic mood slowly started to lift. "You meanâ€|?"

"Yes." Talon answered, eyes softening. "We will reach a decision on whether or not to join your Berk and be one with the humans."

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **And if I have to crawl, will you crawl too?**

I stumble and I fall, carry me throughâ€|

The wonder of it allâ€|is you.

Seeing me through.

Crawl - Superchick

Past me: Wow. Thirteen Pages. Ugh. Let's make sure never to do that again.

Me now: I can't stop typingâ€|-sob-someoneâ€|.-sob-â€|anyoneâ€|help

FIFTEEN PAGES. NEW (unfortunate) RECORD D:

*Allegro - A sort-of fast tempo.

Happy 50th chapter, peepz! I hope you love it! Next chapter they'll finally answer ANOTHER burning question! Review tons and maybe I'll get it out sometime next week ;) BTW: Fanfiction is being a butt and lagging really bad, so I dunno if I'll get this out when I want toâ€|

A/N: **If I could find a way to see this straight, I'd run away
**

To some fortune that I should have found by now.

**And so I run now to the things they say could restore me, restore
life the way it should be**

I'm waiting for this cough syrup to go downâ€|

Cough Syrup - Young the Giant

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

The heavy tenseness that settled over the shoulders of the gathered people did not need to be addressed between the group. It was plain and obvious in the way that no words were spoken in the cavern. In the way that all the Night Furies had gathered in a tight knit in the center of the magnificent den. The group that had come from Berk stood by the entrance of the cave, stiff and rigid as they stared straight ahead. Hiccup didn't even need to shoot glances back at the others behind him like he usually did. He didn't have to turn around and give them a look that said: This-is-it. Because they knew. They were fully aware that this small event would either ensure their success, or smash it apart entirely. Their entire future was on a line here, and they all waited with bated breath for the deciding factor, no matter what it was going to turn out to be.

Astrid was like a shadow at Hiccup's side, blue eyes wide with fear and apprehension as her breath slowly quickened into a hyperventilation. As the silence stretched on, the girl seemed to be gripped tighter and tighter with panic, and Hiccup pulled her close in a vain effort to try and calm her down. The girl wrapped her arms tightly around the boy's waist, clinging to him like he was her connecting link to the world.

Ducking his head into the crook of her neck for a moment, Hiccup allowed himself a brief spasm of panic as well. He shut his eyes tightly, increasing his grip on her as the thought ripped its way angrily into his head for what seemed like the millionth time since he'd gotten here. _Was I wrong in doing this? _He glanced up at the others that were sitting around him, looking just as frazzled as he was inwardly. Toothless and Mistyeyes crouched on the cave ground together with nervous looks, the gray dragon pressed against the black for support. Shadowclaw sat anxiously beside the two, oblivious to their affection towards one another as he searched the crowd in the center of the cave fearfully. He was probably straining for a sight of Leafdapple. Nightflight endured her fear the best, it seemed. She sat taut and reserved in her own right, the only showing of her feelings coming out in the small flicking of her tail or ears. Other than that, she was completely still, an image etched into the stone of the cave wall.

_Did I do right in bringing them all here? Unearthing something that we could have put behind ourselves so easily? Did I make the right choice when I objected to my father, put the village back into potential danger, and put Nightflight in this position? _His shaking grasp on Astrid seemed to startle the girl into realizing that he was near his breaking point. The silence in the cave was too much, it was pushing down on him; he was staggering underneath its weight; he was

going to fall. _What happens if they say no? What happens if they turn on us because Nightflight is with us? What happens if they start the Raids up again? What happens if they kill everyone in Berk? What happens if everything falls apart?_

What happens if my dad was right?

"Hey, hey, hey." Astrid whispered, ducking out of his embrace with a panicked look. She looked so scared and surprised, and that's when Hiccup realized that he was shaking from head to toe. Startled at himself, Hiccup raised a hand to press tenderly against the side of his head, closing his eyes and forcing himself to take in a slow breath. Astrid still looked worried despite the efforts, a sullen frown gracing her features as she searched her Viking's face. "Are you okay?" She asked gently, blue eyes softer than the sky as she realized that he was so wrecked.

Muttering through clenched teeth, Hiccup tried to convey all of his worries through his words. All of his fears, shame, and personal thoughts. But he came out tongue-tied. What could he say to her, after all? Astrid spent every Sunday with her father throwing axes and sparring together for a good half of the day. She could tell her parents anything and everything, and always had funny stories to tell about the two with their group. Hiccup spent years sitting silently on the steps of his home, waiting patiently for his father to get back from meeting with the other higher-ups in the village. He'd sat by Sunday after Sunday, watching sadly from the stairs as Astrid hopped after her father, axe in hand as she giggled alongside the man.

She didn't know what it was like to walk on glass. To watch carefully where you put your feet, and question your every step. _Is this the right place to walk? Will it benefit me in the long run, or will it just make me look stupid again? Can I walk here, or would everything fall apart? Can I walk here and still look good to _him?_ _The pressure, the complications, the overall stress. Hiccup locked his jaw backwards, finally managing to spit out something through the barrier his teeth created. "It's taking too long." He hissed, trying to focus on keeping himself upright.

"It'll be okay." Astrid encouraged him. When Hiccup didn't seem to be all that reassured, her eyes softened. She turned, reaching over and grasping his shoulders with a comforting squeeze. "Don't freak out." She coached firmly, Hiccup's green eyes flashing a little guiltily as she raised her eyebrows at him skeptically. "Freaking out is my job, okay? Don't put me out of a job." She was trying to get Hiccup's attention elsewhere, taking his focus off of his inner struggle and focusing it instead on her bad joke. The words caused the boy to crack a small smile, but he still couldn't ignore the way that his heart rammed itself painfully against his chest.

He opened his mouth to say something, when suddenly a strong voice cut him off. The whole group jumped at the call, turning in its direction to be met with Fleetfoot. The Night Fury was standing near the edge of the group, ears flattened as he surveyed first the other dragons, then the others standing separately by the exit. His tail lashed at the sight of them, and Hiccup's gaze hardened sourly at his attitude. He could at least try and look like he wanted to be here, if he was going to stand up there and talk. Glaring in the direction of the dragon, Hiccup stepped closer to Astrid, holding her close to

him in a protective as he scowled. The girl didn't react badly to the notion of being sheltered like she normally would have. Oddly, being surrounded by a bunch of Night Furies in a dark cave was enough to make the girl a little less independent. Weird as it may seem.

"Alright." Fleetfoot said coldly, turning around and sweeping a sour look across the dragons that were gathered before him. "We're going to do this fast, and we're going to do this orderly." Nightflight's eyes flashed at the male's high tone of voice, as if he were better than all the others. She realized now that she probably gave the dragon too much power in the first place. He couldn't find his way out of an empty room. But the dragon didn't notice her look, turning and sweeping his tail from one end of the cave to the other. "If you want to stay here on the island, go over there." He gestured over across from the group that had come from Berk, to the darker half of the cavern where the light didn't reach. "And if you want to go to Berk, go over there." He added, tone dripping with irritation as he added the other direction. He jerked his head lamely towards Hiccup and the others, not even sending them a passing glance.

Hiccup mumbled what Fleetfoot had said out of the corner of his mouth to Astrid, who watched the scene with pursed lips. When he mimicked the creeping tone with the last instruction, Astrid let out an indignant huff. "I guess we know which side he's gonna go to." She muttered out of the corner of her mouth, crossing her arms tightly over her chest as she leaned back slightly. But then she bit her lip, watching a little more anxiously now as the dragon turned back into the crowd. One by one, Night Furies were starting to detach themselves from the others, gazes flickering from one end of the cavern to the other.

Letting her hands drop from across her stomach, Astrid reached down nervously. Her hand clasped tightly into Hiccup's own, and the boy glanced over at her with an edgy look at the touch. The blonde turned towards him, looking into his eyes with her's for a moment before cracking a rather weak smile. "This is it." She breathed out, voice shaky. Over to the side, Mistyeyes and Toothless fidgeted uncomfortably at the words. "Let's make it or break it." Astrid added as an afterthought.

Hiccup blew out his cheeks reluctantly, shifting his weight back and forth restlessly.

Talon was first to move. The brown Night Fury walked confidentially out of the throng, eyes flashing over to Mistyeyes as she ducked her head away with a ghost of a smile. The father skirted around the edge of the crowd, going over quickly and bounding over to the entrance of the cave. His eyes were soft as he took in the band of misfits, giving them a dip of his head as he seated himself neatly, exactly a yard away from them. "I stand by my word: I have much to learn from you." He said solemnly. "And I hope that by coming with you to Berk, I'll find a better life."

Hiccup tightened his hold on Astrid's hand, heart still ramming anxiously against his chest. "You will." He promised softly, voice barely escaping his clenched throat. Talon glanced over at him, and Hiccup felt a jolt of heat, as if he'd said something stupid or wrong. He opened his mouth to backtrack and correct whatever he might have said weird, but thankfully Astrid was watching him closely. At

the hint of the Viking starting to babble, she leaned forward quickly, raising her foot and smashing her heel down as hard as she could on his boot.

Immediately, Hiccup snapped his mouth shut, eyes widening as he bent over in pain. He screwed his eyes closed tightly, biting his lower lip with a growl of pain. Astrid didn't even glance at him, flashing an awkward smile over in the direction of Talon, who watched the interaction with a quizzical expression. "You didn't have to do that." Hiccup hissed, voice tight and hoarse as he mumbled out of the corner of his mouth angrily.

"Oh, no, I did." Astrid responded shortly.

Leafdapple came next. Her green eyes gleamed as she chased after Talon, footsteps thumping against the ground as she rushed up to Shadowclaw. The Night Fury seemed overjoyed with the girl's consent of coming back to Berk, tail curling upwards with happiness as she skidded to a stop beside him. She'd come much closer to them than Talon had, and a lot more faster too. Her paws kneaded the ground as she looked at the group around her with excitement, as if she were already eager to leave. Leaning over, she bumped Shadowclaw's shoulder with her own playfully. "Told you I wouldn't leave you hanging." She purred contentedly.

"I'm glad." The adolescent replied, smiling.

Juniper, an elderly dragon, got to her feet slowly, giving a small grimace as she moved. "I'm sorry." She said clearly, sounding genuinely regretful. Mistyeyes perked at the apology, turning around and fixing her inquisitive blue eyes on the elder. "But my wings are far too tired to make a journey such as the one you're talking about." Toothless's ears flattened to his head, disappointment writing itself across his face. "I pledge you all for doing something so noble. But sadly, I can not be a part of your legacy." Hesitating a moment and shuffling a little nervously, Juniper turned around swiftly, heading slowly back to the end of the cave.

A few of the other older dragons nodded along with this statement, steady looks flashed their way as more and more dragons started to head over to the darker part of the cave. The thick crowd in the center was starting to thin out gradually as dragons chose the direction in which they wanted to go. Night Furies went back and forth among one another, tense conversations springing up between others as nervous looks were traded this way and that. Mistyeyes pricked her ears, straining to catch snatches of the conversations that were going on around her. But they were too quiet. The female gave up as she sat back, scowling with disappointment.

Toothless nudged her comfortingly. "It's okay." He whispered softly. "It'll work out."

Mistyeyes only looked away from him, down at the ground as her frown remained.

But she perked after a moment, brightening at once as two others made their way towards them. And with a jolt, she realized that she recognized the faces that came her way. It was the mother and her child that she had watched closely before they all left for Berk to start the Raids. The one who had fought with her mate and then

watched him leave her in the dust so long ago. Her eyes were narrowed now; but this time with determination, not anger. Her steps were sure, and her strides went unchallenged by any moral doubt that might reside in her mind. At her side, her son stumbled after her, looking almost alarmed as they got closer and closer to the humans. He was older than he had been back then, having grown at least a few inches taller. But his scales were still soft, his face rounded with youth as he walked a little unsteadily at his mother's side.

When the two came to a stop, the mother's gaze automatically trained itself on Mistyeyes. The gray female stiffened under the weight of the stare, startled to find a hint of raw sadness in the gaze. Did she know that Mistyeyes had watched her that day? Did she know that instead of going forward in an attempt to help, she just sat by and observed like it was a form of entertainment? Reluctantly, Mistyeyes took a small step forward, opening her mouth and trying to express her guilt as best she could. "I'm--"

But the mother cut her off. "My son is able to fly, if only just." She glanced back at the elders who had retired to the other end of the cave, then she turned over to Hiccup, looking at the human with an almost respective look. "It'll be a long journey back with him, and it might be hard to keep him safe. But I think that you all will hold to your word that Nightflight gave." The female in question gave a small wince at the memory of her hasty vow. "I believe that you will keep us safe."

She paused, eyes darkening somewhat, as if thinking back to the scene that Mistyeyes had witnessed in this very cavern. It seemed like a lifetime ago, and in truth, it was. But the gray dragon remembered it just as clearly. "I never believed in second chances." The mother continued, voice much more quieter by now. "But I think this time, I will have to make an exception." She turned and looked at Nightflight carefully. "You've created a lot of trouble for me. As well as everyone else." The dragoness's ear flicked at this, frowning immediately. "But you seem ready and willing to do anything and everything to make up for it. And the place sounds safer for me and my son than here. So I will come along."

Toothless smiled assuredly at her words. "You and your youngling will be perfectly safe." He promised.

The mother nodded once, turning to face the remaining dragons in the crowd as she sat down beside her child. She wrapped a protective wing around his small frame, pulling him close to her side. Lowering her head, the dragoness rasped a tongue over her son's head affectionately. Off to the side, the male that had abandoned her before was now looking anxiously in their direction. His eyes were raw with a certain kind of pain as he watched the female, but if she noticed the stare, she gave no heed. Mistyeyes watched as his ears flattened to his head, the male backing up slowly as he reluctantly started for the other side of the cave. As soon as he turned, the mother cracked open one eye, watching him go with a guarded look. Mistyeyes half-hoped that she would speak out and call him back over. But the female just looked back down at her son, suddenly engrossed in the task of fixing his wings.

Suddenly, a tightly-knit group of dragons that had been talking together broke away from the crowd, making their own flock as they started over towards them. But instead of going over to Toothless,

Mistyeyes, or Shadowclaw, they veered straight for Hiccup. The head of the group, looking as if she had been elected to speak, stepped forward and looking the boy up and down critically.

At her side, Toothless stiffened considerably, ears flattening to his head as he braced himself in case Hiccup found himself in danger again. Mistyeyes winced, lifting her tail and draping it over his side in what she hoped was a comforting gesture. If he flared up at others they wouldn't get anywhere, after all. Her touch seemed to distract him from the moment a little bit, the dragon ducking his head with a frustrated grumble as he turned his sharp look down to the ground. Mistyeyes rolled her eyes at him pointedly, shaking her head back and forth. There was no helping him sometimes.

The head dragon cleared her throat softly, glancing back at the others behind her before saying anything. "My name is Brightstream." She said finally, still looking closely at Hiccup. The Viking grinned back at her, actually managing to look convincingly excited as he waited for her to go on. "I've heard a lot about you." She said, eyes flashing as she leaned a little closer to him. Hiccup went rigid at this, but to his credit, he didn't move away. "First, I heard about you when Toothless came back to the cave with Nightflight in the first place. Nightflight told us that you'd been keeping him hostage." Hiccup turned and shot the female a sour look. Nightflight grimaced guiltily, mumbling out something along the lines of an apology as she turned away nonchalantly.

But Brightstream wasn't finished talking. "Then I heard you had come to this cave to get Toothless back to you again. I wasn't one of the dragons that saw what actually went on; all I knew was that you'd gotten away." She blinked, titling her head to the side with a small hint of confusion. "Then Nightflight rallied us all together, saying that you were the prime target. That you had ruined everything for the Night Furies and had been the one to attract the humans here to the cave. The humans that attacked us, that is."

Hiccup fumed silently, flashing an even sharper look in Nightflight's direction.

Shuffling her paws, Nightflight shrugged listlessly. "You had to admit, I had a point with that one." She whispered out of the corner of her mouth. Hiccup just brushed her off, pushing her shoulder with an irritated look as he tried to focus his attention back onto the dragon that was still talking.

"And now you're all back here trying to correct a bunch of mistakes that you apparently made." She flicked her ears back and forth decisively, looking thoughtful. The others around her, about five or six, glanced her way in agreement as she spoke. "I'll be honest: you make it kind of hard to realize what's right and what's wrong." Brightstream said with an absent-minded flick of her tail. Before Hiccup could speak up for himself, she suddenly cracked a sly grin. "But I'll admit, with everything you've shown us about what you can do with humans, it seems like a much better life than here. I'd like to be able to experience the life at Berk. With all of these others."

"Wellâ€¦you'll be welcome." Hiccup managed.

"Are you serious?" Frost yowled indignantly where he stood. The

dragon leapt to his feet, eyes blazing angrily as his wings shot out threateningly at his sides. The other dragons turned around to face him, the crowd in the center much smaller than it had been moments before. The side of Berk was a little bit bigger than the 'leave' side of the cave, but not by much. And by the way Frost was looking, Hiccup wondered nervously if the 'leave' side would start to get bigger in a minute or two. "Have you all forgotten what the humans have done to us? And now you're just going to forgive them! Just like that!"

Talon flared at the objection. "Try not to be stupider than you can help, Frost." He snarled, claws flashing in the dim light of the cave as he glared in the male's direction. Mistyeyes turned to look at her father, silent as she curled her tail tighter around herself. The Elder stepped forward swiftly, raising his tail and sweeping it back in a large arc to point out the others behind him. "Hiccup and Nightflight have already showed you how wrong you were once, do they really have to do it again?"

"They can do it a million times over!" Frost roared, pacing forward stiffly as he broke away from the crowd. Dragons shuffled away from him, clearing the space rapidly. Their eyes were wide with surprise from the sudden outburst, and it was obvious that they weren't too keen on being around him at the moment. But Hiccup could see a few offended looks in the crowd, mumbles and glares thrown the aggressor's way. He felt his stomach drop at the sight. They seemed like possible candidates for Berk dragons! What would happen if their mind was changed by Frost? Or any of these other dragons that were standing by them now?

Frost whirled around to glare daggers at Hiccup and Astrid. The blonde was frozen at his side, blue eyes wide with fright as she clung tightly to Hiccup's hand. She nearly cut off his blood circulation, but the boy didn't try and say anything to her. His mind was racing a mile a minute; he was too preoccupied to even try and translate to her what was going on. Which might have made her fear even worse, though, so it might have been a good thing, really.

"You think that coming here and doing a bunch of fancy flying with take away everything that humans have done?" Frost screeched, still making for their group. And Hiccup had the nasty assumption that he wasn't going over there to join them. "Humans have killed dragons! In cold-blooded murder! They've stormed this very cave and tore it apart!" Hiccup slowly let go of Astrid's hand. "They interfered in our lives and caused millions of us to suffer! Humans are not our friends! They're controllers! They're rulers! They're vile, pathetic creatures!"

"You're wrong." Hiccup said tensely, all eyes going to him.

Frost stopped halfway to them, eyes smoldering as he suddenly seemed to grow to be twice his size. His face held years upon years of anger, and the hatred was enough to set Hiccup's blood boiling when the dragon set his gaze onto him. "What?" He hissed through clenched teeth. His voice was like a snake as it hissed Hiccup's way, and the boy could imagine it wrapping around his throat, cutting off his air and making him unable to speak. "What did you just say?" Frost repeated, much more harsher than before as Hiccup fought not to wince away from it.

"I said you're wrong." He said instead, clenching his hands tightly and praying to Thor that they wouldn't shake. "You obviously haven't been listening like these Night Furies have." He said, throwing one arm back and gesturing to the others behind him. He saw Astrid smile softly at him, and Toothless give an assured nod in his direction. Breathing out slowly and feeling the support of everyone behind him, Hiccup forced himself to meet Frost's glare. "On Berk, humans and dragons live together in harmony, like it should be. We don't force them to do anything they don't want, and we treat them like equals."

He paused a moment before he decided to try and push it; like he always does. "I'm glad you don't want to come." He said, leaning back and crossing his arms over his chest. Frost flared at this, huffing out through his nostrils as he looked down at Hiccup. "You can't see what's right in front of your nose." Hiccup snapped. "If you don't want to work with humans, we don't want to work with you. So you can just go over there instead of making a big scene like you're doing." Hiccup jabbed a finger angrily over to the other side of the cave, meeting Frost's glare with his own.

"Who do you think you are?" Frost seethed, bending down low and raising his claws threateningly as he bent over the boy.

But Hiccup didn't even budge, nose-to-nose with the furious dragon. "I'm Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third." He growled, leaning forward sharply at this and causing Frost to jerk backwards out of surprise. "I'm the heir to the tribe on Berk, and I'm doing this to make a difference. Humans aren't perfect, but you know what, neither are you!" His arms flashed back down to tight fists at his sides, the boy taking a step forward now as he turned to be the offensive. "But if we managed to become one together, I think we'd come darn near close to being perfect!

"If you don't want to join us, that's fine! Like I said, humans don't think that they own dragons! You can make fun of me if you want, that not where I draw the line! But where I do cross the line is when you make fun of my friends! Or question these other dragons!" The Night Furies around him jerked with surprise at the implication that Hiccup was already standing up for them. The confused and angered faces slowly melted into pleasantly surprised ones. Hiccup felt assurance as mummings of conversation started up around them, and he could tell that Frost knew he was losing ground.

"If humans are so high and mighty on pedestals," Frost growled out, wings arching with anger as he spat out the last few words. Hiccup's jaw locked backwards as he bit back the harsh words he would have liked to say in reply. "then why were they so quick to cut her head off?" He asked, jerking his head quickly over to Nightflight. Hiccup blinked, guard falling somewhat at the difficult question. He turned back to look at Nightflight, and he could see that the female was at a loss just as much as he was. She looked surprised by the question, and Hiccup felt his stomach twist as Night Furies stared at him intently, waiting for the answer.

He found his gaze landing on Astrid. The blonde was tense where she stood in between Toothless and Nightflight, and when her blue eyes clashed with his green, she stood a little straighter. Her face was clouded with confusion; after all, she had no idea what was going on; Hiccup wasn't back there with her to walk her through it. But it was

obvious that she knew something was wrong. Her hands were busy wringing together, and she was shifting from side to side like she always did when she was nervous. And she looked even more frightened with the way that more and more Night Furies were starting to stand around them in a cluster.

But when she looked at Hiccup, a little bit of the confusion seemed to melt away. She gave him a small smile, a sort of proud gleam in her eyes as they softened. She gave him a small, single nod, opening her mouth and moving it silently. 'You're doing good.' She mouthed in his direction, reaching up and clasping her hands together tightly over her chest. She still looked nervous at the sight of him, but it looked as if she'd finally come to terms with the fact that his insane ways of fixing things eventually ended out pretty okay in the end.

That, or she just didn't want to put herself in the middle of things.

Hiccup liked the first thought better.

Taking in a slow breath, he forced himself to turn back around. "I don't know." He stated plainly, trying to ignore the swell of mummies around him at the statement. "It's a wrong that I came here to right." Hiccup said firmly. "We used to be enemies with all the dragons before we learned to cooperate with them, so this is the same deal here. Except we need to make sure that this will never happen again. And it'll be easy; as long as we all learn to work together like we've been doing the past few days."

"I haven't been 'working together.'" Frost scoffed, as if the words were foolish.

"Yes, well, we're all aware of this." Hiccup flashed back hotly.

"You'd best watch your mouth before I rip it off." Frost snarled suddenly, lashing out and claws grabbing out right for Hiccup's face. The boy jumped, ducking down low and dodging the blow quickly. The narrow escape made it look as though it were planned, the Night Furies around them straightening as an impressed look overcame their faces. Frost snarled angrily, jabbing out again as he made for Hiccup's side this time. The boy responded by sweeping away a bit more dramatically this time, slower now as he raised a skeptical eyebrow at Frost.

The Night Fury yowled, throwing himself forward as he tried to tear a chunk of the boy off with his teeth.

Hiccup only jumped away once again, landing on the ground neatly as he turned back to face Frost, crossing his arms over his chest for the second time. The Night Fury whirled around, seething and fuming with rage now as he breathed out in uneven huffs. Hiccup narrowed his eyes in a sharp glare suddenly, a little of Frost's fury catching onto him as he shot the dragon a deathly look. "That's cute." He spat, glowering in the dragon's direction.

Frost screeched with anger, gathering himself for another blow. But suddenly the Night Furies found their voices. The undecided ones called out against the male, leaping to their feet from where they

all sat behind Hiccup. The Viking turned to face them as they stood, eyes widening a fraction as a hopeful smile spread across his face. A mottled dragon was first to speak, eyes flashing in the dark cavern as they growled under their breath. "Lay off, Frost." He snapped. "You've already made yourself look foolish way too many times."

"Leave him alone!" A female declared, eyes burning. "His words are true!"

"You're an idiot! Just get over to the other side, already!" Another drawled.

A Night Fury stepped forward, detaching himself from the group as he came to a stop beside Hiccup. His eyes were a startlingly pale gray, scales a just-as-pale black. He lashed his tail from side to side for a moment before finally shaking his head. "It's dragons like you that make this place the way it is." He stated firmly, shooting the male a glare before starting over to where the others in Hiccup's group were waiting. "I'm going someplace better than this, and hopefully I'll be far away from you."

The dragon speaking brushed rudely by Frost, nearly knocking the aggressor right off his feet as he staggered. The male righted himself, looking over his shoulder and watching with a slightly put-out expression as more and more Night Furies murmured in assent. Slowly, Hiccup watched with a growing smile as most of the remaining dragons got to their feet, following in step with the others as they went to join Berk. They filed past, shooting supportive looks back at Hiccup as they brushed by him.

Pretty soon, it was just him, Frost, and Fleetfoot left.

Frost let out a loud curse, glaring over in the direction of the now-large group at the exit. Mistyeyes got to her feet, eyes hardening as she stepped forward. "Give it up, Frost." She said firmly, claws flashing dangerously in the dim light that managed to get inside the cave. The moon was starting to rise outside, and it didn't do well to keep the place very well-lit. "We're leaving with or without you. At least, all of us on this side of the cave. Whether you like it or not, we will leave here tomorrow at first light. There's nothing you can do now except watch us leave for a better life while you just sit here." She looked him up and down critically, lip curling as she did so. "You're not welcome with us anymore, and you certainly won't be welcome in Berk."

"Tch." Frost fumed angrily, daring to hold Mistyeyes's gaze before spinning around in a huff. "I never wanted to be 'welcome' there." He snarled, stomps bouncing back and forth on the cave walls as he made for the other end. As he passed Hiccup, he gave the boy a mean-spirited shove, the boy stumbling slightly as he tried to right himself. Not glancing back at the others, Frost melted into the shadows of the den, with the others that refused to go.

Hiccup straightened, turning back and looking over his shoulder.

It was just him and Fleetfoot now.

The Night Fury had been silent all this time, having become quiet ever since he first gave out the order of their voting. Now, it

showed that he looked quiet troubled with the prospect of this choice that lay in front of him. His eyes flashed from the left to the right, face creased over with some kind of odd emotion that Hiccup couldn't quite read. The male turned over, and Hiccup immediately offered him what he hoped was a reassuring smile. But to his surprise, Fleetfoot's gaze swept right by the Viking, going instead over to one of the other dragons.

His gaze found itself trained firmly onto Nightflight, who had taken to sitting near the edge of the growing group of dragons. His eyes were somewhat pained as they landed on her, and Hiccup felt a small connection linking together in his head as he looked from one to the other. Nightflight stiffened suddenly, as if she could feel someone watching her. She straightened, ears perking at once as she tilted her head to the side. She hesitated a moment, as if thinking. Then: "Fleetfoot?" The quiet prompt came.

Fleetfoot's ears flicked. "How did you know it was me?" He asked, voice guarded.

"You haven't spoken up yet." Nightflight answered softly. "You usually have a few things to say on the matter."

"Not this one." He said shortly, Hiccup's smile dashing away at once.

Nightflight blinked slowly, ears flicking down, a little unsure. "â€¦" She whispered.

"I can't forgive the humans for what they've done." Fleetfoot said tightly. "Or the dragons going towards them." Nightflight winced softly at this, Mistyeyes and Toothless throwing the male angered looks. But he only flicked his tail. "This is where I've lived my whole life, and I intend to keep it that way." He said. He paused, then: "â€¦I wish you all luck, though." He added grudgingly, looking back over at Nightflight a heartbeat more before giving a small sigh. "You'll need it." He said shortly.

He turned quickly after this, walking right past the group that had chosen to stay and diving into one of the branching tunnels. The place was left in silence with the parting words, Hiccup turning around fully and staring numbly into the darkness of the tunnel where Fleetfoot had vanished. His shoulders drooped with disappointment, feeling a stab of both pity and sadness for Nightflight. It seemed like once again, she was left in the dust.

A slight pressure on his shoulder caused him to turn. Astrid gave him a small smile as he twisted around, blue eyes shimmering as they looked into his own. "You did it." She said softly, voice tight with happiness. "You did everything you said you would; I'm so proud of you." She pulled him forward quickly, wrapping him in a tight hug.

"I didn't do everything yet." He whispered softly, not returning the embrace as his arms stayed loose at his sides.

"You've done all you could." Astrid said reproachfully, refusing to let him look at the bad side of things. She pulled back, fixing him with a sharp look. "You can't get every dragon on the bandwagon, alright? So don't beat yourself up about any of that." Hiccup gave

her a weak smile at this, appreciating her ridiculously-ridiculous attempts at jokes. Catching the small crack, Astrid's smile started to show behind her stern look. "And look." She said firmly, reaching out and placing both hands tightly on each of his shoulders. "We're going to pull through this, alright? We've come too far to lose pace right now, so we won't let it happen."

Hiccup sighed heavily. "You're right." He gave in.

"I always am." Astrid said lightly, tightening her grip on his shoulders and steering him around so that he faced the joining Night Furies.

Nearly the entire Pack had decided to follow them back. There were some young ones that looked barely enough to fly, and others that looked like they might _lose _the ability to fly any second now. There was a range of ages, old to young, and in between. And now that the other dragons that had decided to stay were going after Fleetfoot, they were the only ones in the cave. The silence pressed down on their shoulders, and for a moment, Hiccup couldn't find the words to speak what he was thinking.

The dragons' eyes were trained on him explicitly; they were waiting for some kind of assurance that they had made the right decision in leaving their home to travel to Berk. Had they, though? Hiccup felt the same pressing sensation on his mind like he had before the whole voting thing started, and he cursed himself over and over as a curtain was pulled over his brain. Why was this happening to him all of a sudden? It didn't used to, so what had changed? Was it just because he realized how close he was to going back to Berk and facing his father again? Or had the words finally registered in Hiccup's mind from when his father told him he would make a terrible chief one day?

A small cough came from the back of the group, in the suspicious direction to where Shadowclaw was sitting. Toothless turned over, glaring down at the smaller dragon as he lifted a paw, swiping it outwards and cuffing the youngling over the head. He caused the male to smack into the floor of the cave, giving out a small grunt as he planted himself into the ground. Leafdapple purred with amusement where she sat, shoulders shaking up and down as she snickered. Shadowclaw pried himself off the floor, whirling around and shooting the girl a fiery glare. Copying Toothless, Shadowclaw reached over and poked her harshly in the side, causing the female to let out a loud squeak as the prod tickled her.

Mistyeyes leaned over, giving the trio a large: 'Shush.' She shot them a firm look of a parent, the group immediately falling into a sulky silence as they flashed looks of irritation her way.

The sight caused Hiccup to let his guard down, a small smile playing on the edges of his lips as Shadowclaw and Toothless pushed one another back and forth bad-temperedly. Ludi squawked loudly where she sat, nervous already from the sheer amount of dragons around her now. She made her way for Hiccup, losing interest with the Night Furies as she weaved her way out of the throng. The other dragons that had recently joined let out loud gasps of shock as the little ball of fluff made her way forward. Some went rigid with surprise, others cooed over the adorable thing, and others shot to their feet, bouncing up and down as they tried not to step on her.

The cat didn't pay attention though. She bounded forward eagerly, oblivious to the chaos she left in her wake as the Night Furies fell away from one another in an attempt to keep from squishing her. She bounced right up to Hiccup, gathering herself for a heartbeat before leaping up, landing squarely in the boy's arms. Immediately, she purred loudly, vibrating with happiness as she snuggled into his chest warmly. Hiccup smiled at the cat, looking up and glancing back to Mistyeyes. The gray dragon was rolling her eyes at the nuisance that was now in Hiccup's embrace, obviously growing impatient with the lack of words going towards the group. The silence was stretching on, and it was obviously getting to her.

Hiccup grinned; nothing had changed. This was still his group of friends, the people that he had learned with and traveled with so easily. Nightflight, Toothless, Mistyeyes, Shadowclaw, Astrid, and Ludi. There was just a few more people here now than there were before; with luck, they would become old friends as well, in time. There was nothing different, and there was nothing difficult, either. Patting Ludi's head gingerly, and silently thanking her for reminding him, Hiccup took a small step forward along with Astrid. The Night Furies straightened, turning to him attentively now as they looked at him eagerly.

Yes, they would all become old friends, too. Of him, and hopefully the other Vikings on Berk.

It would just take time; time and work. Hopefully they would have enough of that here.

"Thank you." He began softly, beaming at the group assembled in front of him. "I'll make sure that you didn't make a mistake; you're going to really love Berk. And Berk is going to _really _love you." The dragons shifted eagerly at the promise, and Hiccup let them calm down before he dipped his head, going on. "Now, it'll be a sort of long journey to there, and we still need to work a few things. So first thing's firstâ€¦"

(~**~) (~**~) (~**~) (~**~)

A/N: **Are you gonna be like your father was, and his father was?**

Do you have to carry what they've handed down?

No, this is not your legacy, this is not your destiny. Yesterday does not define you.

No, this is not your legacy, this is not your meant-to-be.

I can break the chains that bind you.

Family Tree - Matthew West

Dang. Sorry for the lack of updates! I finished HALF of my summer homework though, so do I get a round of applause!? And to answer someone's question: Yes, I AM in AP English class XD ((Hence the really stupid, really boring summer homework)). Anyway! Hope you all like this chapter! Next chapter they go to â€¦ DUN DUN DUN â€¦ BERK! Aw yezzzzzz

HEY! Any of you who live near the ILLINOIS CONVENTION CENTER should drop by July 13th and 14th! There's gonna be an anime convention, and I'll be there! ;)

Go check out mah poll ppl~!

52. Chapter 52

A/N: I've decided to make a third story and make this a trilogy. I was going to keep going on with this story, but it's getting too long for my liking, and I figure that the actual theme of the last section of this story can actually fit itself into a whole other thing. Plus, people have been asking for a third story everywhere I turn! So~!

I'm gonna mark this as completed! We finish off with the Night Furies agreeing to go with Hiccup, who is ((sort-of)) ready to lead them all! The new title coming up is going to be Revelation, so you can go over and check that out if you're interested :)

Hope to see you again! And thank you once again for being such dears with reading my story ^.^

End
file.